

#218: NOVEMBER 2016 • INDYPENDENT.ORG

THE INDYPENDENT

**PEACE, LOVE &
DRONES, P6**

WOMEN & TRUMP, P17

**REVEREND BILLY'S
HEALING WORDS, P22**

THE END IS NEAR

**ELECTION SURVIVAL GUIDE
STARTS P8**



**THE INDYPENDENT, INC.**

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THE INDYPENDENT

#217: OCTOBER 2016 • INDYPENDENT.ORG

**AN APP OF OUR OWN**

I'm for unions creating apps and putting together their own businesses. They could tout them to customers as a services that provide workers economic justice. ("Apped to be Screwed," Oct. *Indypendent*).

— TERRY L.

CRUDE AWAKENING

I have significant respect for Jeremy Brecher's work ("DAPL and the Future of US Labor," *Indyblog*). I remember using his book *Strike!* as a basis for student teaching back in 1994. His scholarship and attention to detail is on display in this article, which is as accurate as anything I've seen on the Dakota Access pipeline. But I think here, as in many progressive corners of the Internet, the case against the pipeline is more assumed than proven. The pipeline will hardly play a role in expanding petroleum development. Bakken crude has had no problems finding its way to market by rail — a more dangerous and carbon-producing mode of transportation.

— GEOFF H.

FROM SANDY TO MATTHEW

Really strong reflection on the effects of climate change and Hurricane Sandy on his home by Liam Flynn-Jambeck (Hurricane Matthew, a Deadly Reminder of Climate Chaos to Come," *IndyBlog*). Well worth the read.

— RAQUEL

WAKING UP FROM A NIGHTMARE

Trump is a byproduct of our corrupt corporate media that has given him billions of dollars in free air time while censoring progressives like Bernie and now Jill Stein ("What Are They Afraid Of?," Oct. *Indypendent*). Both parties and their puppet candidates are two sides of the same counterfeit coin. Time to reject the two-party nightmare and support real progressive champions of democracy, human rights, peace and environmental justice. That is why, after 29 years as a Democrat, I have awakened to reject both parties.

— DAVE E.

INSANE CLOWN POSSE

Not sure adding more clowns to the circus will make the debates any more or less enjoyable. What I would really like to see is some policy talk.

— FREYA M.

PEACE WITH JUSTICE

The Colombian government of Manuel Santos and Álvaro Uribe will continue, with the assistance of the US, to carry on a program of exploitation and oppression against the majority of the people in Colombia ("After 50 Years of War, a Chance at Peace," Oct. *Indypendent*). People want peace with justice which is a long way coming. The peace vote was defeated by the Right but the people of Colombia should not be blinded, the struggle continues!

— GUSTAVO M.

LET IT SNOW

Excellent review, right to the point ("The Full Snowden," Oct. *Indypendent*). I'd like to add that Oliver Stone's film was visually breathtaking. The color and set design were brilliantly executed. One of my favorite scenes was the aerial view of the forest where basic training was taking place. The shot of the indigo and white trees from above was like nothing I'd ever seen on film.

— CAROL L.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

THU OCT 27
7PM • FREE
BOOK LAUNCH: DEMAND THE IMPOSSIBLE! WITH BILL AYERS AND DANNY KATCH
In critiquing the world around us, Bill Ayers, an insurgent educator and activist, uncovers cracks in our political system, raises horizons radical change, and envisions strategies for building a movement we need to make a world worth living in. Ayers will be in conversation with socialist comic Danny Katch and signing copies of his new book, *Demand the Impossible!*.
Barnes & Noble — Upper West Side
2289 Broadway

THU OCT 27
7:30PM • FREE
DISCUSSION: H.P. LOVECRAFT’S LIFE AND LEGACY
With his latest work, *In the Mountains of Madness: The Life, Death, and Extraordinary Afterlife of H.P. Lovecraft*, award winning historian W. Scott Poole turns his attention to the godfather of American horror. Poole interweaves the legendary writer’s biography with an exploration of Lovecraft as a phenomenon, while challenging some of the views held by Lovecraft devotees. Poole will discuss the life and legacy of Lovecraft with Victor LaValle, whose most recent novella, *The Ballad of Black Tom*, is a reworking of Lovecraft’s *The Horror at Red Hook*.
Greenlight Bookstore
686 Fulton St.

SAT OCT 29
9AM–4:30PM • \$5–\$20 suggested donation
NYC SOCIAL JUSTICE CURRICULUM FAIR
This event brings together educators from across the city who are presenting new ideas beyond test-centric lessons, creating spaces that respect student identities and building community. Free childcare. Food served by Woke Foods, a woman of color-led worker cooperative catering plant-based Dominican, Caribbean, and Latinx cuisine.
City-As-School
16 Clarkson St

MON OCT 31
4PM • \$20, costume or formal wear required
40TH ANNUAL VILLAGE HALLOWEEN COSTUME BALL
A grand coming-together for real witches, everyday New Yorkers and artists alike, this one-night fiesta

takes over all four of Theater for the New City’s performance spaces, plus its lobby and the block of E 10th St. between 1st and 2nd Aves. Customarily over 1,500 wildly-clad celebrants gather for dancing, dining, showing off costumes and viewing acts from the cutting-edge of cabaret and theater. More details at theaterforthenewcity.net.
155 1st Ave

MON OCT 31
7PM–10:30PM • FREE
WEST VILLAGE HALLOWEEN PARADE
Hundreds of puppets, 53 bands, dancers, artists and thousands New Yorkers in costumes of their own creation will be on hand for one of America’s most wildly creative participatory events. This year’s theme is reverie. More at halloween-nyc.com.
Btw Spring and 16th St. on 6th Ave

SUN NOV 6
2PM–5PM
5TH ANNUAL MOMO CRAWL IN JACKSON HEIGHTS
A momo is a dumpling of Himalayan heritage. There are over 20 places that provide momos in Jackson Heights. Every momo vendor in the neighborhood will be offering their version of the dish at the Momo Crawl and participants will vote for the momo they like best. Momos are \$1 each.
Diversity Plaza
37 Ave and 74 St.

SUN NOV 6
4PM–10PM • \$5–\$20, pay what you can
GET OVER HERE: A SCORPIO PARTY
Come celebrate the fierce Scorpions in your life. Show them some birthday love and support movements for justice all at once! Special guest DeeJays. Food by Gabriela Álvarez of Liberation Cuisine. All proceeds support Mayday Space, a Bushwick-based organizing hub and community resource dedicated to all movements for justice.
Starr Bar
214 Starr St.

SUN NOV 6
6PM • FREE
TABOO POETS: TRASHING SHAME
Stigma-busting poetry, performance, and comedy about mental illness.
Bowery Poetry Club
308 Bowery

MON NOV 7
7PM–9:30PM • FREE
FILM SCREENING: REFLECTING HER
This documentary on women’s reproductive rights will be followed by a panel discussion on why our presidential candidates are so silent on women’s issues this election year.
Bluestockings Books
172 Allen St. • 212-777-6028 • blue-stockings.com

WED NOV 9
11AM • FREE
The day after Donald Trump has cemented himself forever in history as a LOSER, Americans of all stripes and creeds will gather at his office to point and laugh. NOTE: At the time of this writing there is a 12.3 percent chance this event will be canceled, according to election forecasters at fivethirtyeight.com.
Trump Tower
725 5th Ave

THU NOV 10
7PM–10PM • \$0 - \$50
PARTY FOR FARMWORKER JUSTICE
This fundraiser for Rural & Migrant Ministry Inc. will feature performances by Lady Quesa’Dilla (Alejandro Rodríguez), a set by DJ Beto, a silent auction, an open beer and wine bar, local, small batch and sustainable foods, as well as other fun surprises!
Admission is \$50, \$20 for students and free for farmworkers.
Mayday Space
176 St Nicholas Ave

FRI NOV 11
7:30PM–9:30PM • \$6–\$15
BOOK LAUNCH: ANTHROPOCENE OR CAPITALOCENE?
Jason W. Moore and Christian Parenti introduce a new essay collection, *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*. The book challenges the theory and history offered by proponents of the “Anthropocene” and stresses how climate change and related crises are rooted in the rise and domination of capital. More at marxedproject.org.
The Commons Brooklyn
388 Atlantic Ave

SAT NOV 12–SUN NOV 13
\$10–\$45
IMAGINE THIS: WOMEN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
This first annual event showcases films produced, directed and written by women from all walks of life from

all over the world. Visit ImagineThisProds.com for tickets and more information.
Wythe Hotel
80 Wythe Ave

FRI NOV 18
8PM–11PM • \$20 online, \$30 at the door
RECEPTION AND SILENT AUCTION FOR INTERFERENCE ARCHIVE
A fundraiser to support the riveting exhibitions, public programming and collections at Interference Archive. Get your wallets ready for an amazing silent auction of social movement ephemera! Visit interferencearchive.org to purchase discounted tickets in advance.
Verso Books
20 Jay St

SUNDAYS NOV 20–DEC 18
1:30PM • \$15
HOLIDAY SHOW: REVEREND BILLY AND THE STOP SHOPPING CHOIR
Earthalujah! Reverend Billy and the Stop Shopping Choir, an NYC-based radical performance community that includes 50 performers and a congregation in the thousands, are back at Joe’s Pub. Join wild anti-corporate gospel shouters and Earth loving urban activists as they exorcise the demons of Consumerism and Militarism from our city and the planet this holiday season. More at RevBilly.com. Also, check out Reverend Billy’s new advice column on page 22.
Joe’s Pub
425 Lafayette St.

WED NOV 23
6PM - 8PM • \$12, 18+
THE REAL HISTORY OF THANKSGIVING
This talk from self-described “historic gastronomist” Sarah Lohman will cover the whole history of the American holiday, from what really happened in Plymouth to the rush of nostalgia that made Thanksgiving a national holiday in the 19th century. Participants will explore how immigrants and suburban housing developments further changed the holiday in the 20th century. Sign-up at BrooklynBrainery.com.
Threes Brewing
333 Douglass Street

LAST LAUGHS: Trump Tower in Midtown has been the site of numerous protests this election year, including this Oct. 12 “GOP Hands Off Me” rally. On Nov. 9, a day after the polls close, New Yorkers will gather at Trump Tower once again. This time to celebrate, or mourn.

NO REST FOR THE WICKED: Join Theater for the New City as it celebrates the 40th anniversary of its raucous costume ball on Oct. 31.

GOPHANDSOFFME.ORG

JONATHAN SLAFF

THE PIPELINE COMETH

ACTIVISTS UP THE ANTE AGAINST A TEXAS-BASED ENERGY COMPANY AS IT FINISHES A 'PIPEBOMB ON THE HUDSON'

BY WENDY SOL

They carried sleeping bags and backpacks stuffed with apples, hummus, tuna fish and bottles of water. If it were not for the PVC pipes and gallon-size buckets of cat litter in their arms, Dave Publow, a longtime anti-fracking activist, and his three friends might have looked like hikers.

The pipes were part of a lockbox the quartet designed to keep police from pulling them apart, a sort of Chinese finger trap for their arms. The cat litter? Well, there weren't going to be any bathroom breaks during the long hours ahead.

Publow and his companions stepped into the 42-inch-wide cylinder before them and crawled approximately 200 feet through the industrial steel tubing slated to comprise a segment of Spectra Energy's AIM pipeline. It was Oct. 10, in Verplanck, New York, on the east side of the Hudson River, and the sun had just begun to rise. They would not breathe fresh air again until well after dark.

AIM is short for Algonquin Incremental Market Project, one of a number of pipelines that are being built in the Northeast to transport natural gas from fracking fields in Pennsylvania to New England and on to markets abroad. If completed by Nov. 1, as planned, AIM will carry approximately 342 million cubic feet of gas to Boston and other ports in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. Spectra is also increasing capacity by more than a third on an existing pipeline that runs within about 100 feet of generators at the aging Indian Point nuclear power plant on the Hudson in Westchester County, about 35 miles north of Midtown Manhattan.

While Publow and the three other protesters were hunkered down inside the pipeline, stopping construction for the day, Spectra complained that they had placed "themselves and first responders at risk." But the risk posed by the pipeline itself, its opponents contend, far outweighs any danger their act of protest entailed.

Environmentalists and public-health experts have long warned about the danger and pollution risks of fracked gas and nuclear power. Westchester locals and environmentalists worry that an accident involving highly inflammable gas beside a nuclear power plant in America's largest metropolitan area could create an unparalleled environmental emergency.

"It's a fucked-up idea to put what amounts to a pipe bomb next to a nuclear power plant," said Publow.

With Spectra intending to have AIM ready by the beginning of November, groups that have opposed the project since it was first proposed to federal regulators in 2014 worry they are running out of time to halt the pipeline and are escalating their activism.

"It is really important to get the people in the area more aware of what is going on," Publow said. "And for the people that have been working to stop this thing so far, to get them to the level where they can accept the idea of doing something they can get arrested for and pause construction."

The four protesters were charged with misdemeanor criminal trespassing when they stepped out of the pipeline shortly before midnight.

PRESSURING THE POLITICIANS

Others, meanwhile, are fighting on other fronts, leaning on New York State's elected leaders to come to their aid. Kim Fraczek, of the environmental watchdog group Sane Energy, wants Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, who have already come out against AIM, to exert more political pressure on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which oversees interstate gas-pipeline developments.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo has stated his opposition to the pipeline, too, but is probably a lost cause, says Fraczek. She notes that although Cuomo announced the state would conduct its own independent safety analysis of AIM in February, the study was not commissioned until July, and it is still underway, even as the project nears completion. HDR Inc, an engineering firm with ties to the oil and gas industry, is conducting the risk assessment. Documents reviewed by the Public Accountability Initiative (PAI) indicate that the pipeline's proximity to Indian Point is no longer within the scope of the review.

A Spectra lobbyist, former Republican Sen. Al D'Amato, has donated heavily to Cuomo over the past year. D'Amato, PAI notes, gave "\$10,000 in December 2015, as public calls for Cuomo to intervene increased; \$15,000 in April 2016, a month after the study was announced; and another \$5,000 contribution in July 2016." The company has also hired lobbyist Mark Grossman, who worked for the Cuomo administration until 2013 and before that, for Cuomo's father, Gov. Mario Cuomo. Spectra has had him on a \$10,000 monthly retainer since March.

"Gov. Cuomo is being lobbied by one of his personal friends to drag his feet on the independent risk assessment," said Fraczek. "We'll continue to keep the drumbeat on him, but we believe Schumer and Gillibrand are much more strategic targets right now" — particularly Schumer, who, as the third-ranking Democrat in the Senate and a contender for majority leader should Hillary Clinton

take the White House, "has his fingers on FERC's purse strings." When Fraczek spoke with *The Independent*, Sane Energy was planning a rally at Schumer's Midtown office on Oct. 26, calling on him to protect his constituents' safety.

Direct actions against the pipeline will likely continue. "When we exited the pipeline," Dave Publow recounted, "our supporters cheered us from the other side of the fence. The cops cuffed us and drove us away. But as we exited, we all kept looking around us, noticing where things were on the construction site, to get ready for next time."

CLOGGED PIPES:

Local activists (from left to right) Rebecca Jeanne Berlin, Mackenzie McDonald Wilkins and Janet Gonzalez joined Dave Publow inside a segment of the AIM pipeline on Oct. 10.

JOURNALISTS TARGETED FOR COVERING FOSSIL FUEL PROTESTS

A North Dakota judge dismissed riot charges brought by the Morton County state attorney's office against Democracy Now! anchor Amy Goodman (pictured to the right) on Oct. 17, citing a lack of evidence.

The charges stemmed from a Sept. 8 protest led by members of the Standing Rock Sioux against the Dakota Access pipeline (DAPL). Goodman and her team shot footage of private security guards attacking demonstrators with dogs that was viewed 14 million times on Facebook. State prosecutor Ladd Erickson, who initially charged Goodman with trespassing, said his office is still investigating the Polk Award winning journalist.

"I wasn't trespassing," Goodman said in a Facebook broadcast, after the case was dismissed. "I wasn't rioting. The Democracy Now team and I were there to report, to document what was happening on the ground. These charges are simply a threat to all journalists around the country: Do not come to North Dakota."

Elsewhere in the state, filmmaker Deia Schlosberg faces three felony

conspiracy charges for filming climate activists on Oct. 18 as they manually shut down a pipeline owned by TransCanada. The protest was part of a coordinated effort in Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota and Washington state to cut off of the United States's 2.8 million barrel-per-day supply of carbon-intensive, Canadian tar sands oil.

The charges against Schlosberg carry a maximum of 45 years in prison. "For reference," NSA-contractor-turned-whistleblower Edward Snowden tweeted, coming to the journalist's defense, "I face a mere 30 years."

Meanwhile, protests against DAPL continue in North Dakota and along its route through South Dakota and Iowa and toward river ports in Illinois. The pipeline has become a flashpoint in the effort to halt fossil fuel extraction given the threat posed by climate change.

— INDYPENDENT STAFF



ERIK MCGREGOR



DEMOCRACY NOW!

THE IMPOSSIBLE LIFE OF A TASKRABBIT

BY ANONYMOUS

EDITOR'S NOTE: In our previous issue, The Independent published an exposé on the gig economy. It detailed ways in which Silicon Valley is exploiting gaps in our labor laws, our tax system, and the precarity of the labor market to deprive workers of basic human rights. After we published the piece, an employee with Taskrabbit — a gig economy start-up that connects workers with consumers and companies offering temporary jobs — reached out to us. What follows is a letter this tasker, who wishes to remain anonymous for fear of retribution, wrote to us in which he further details the strain the gig economy puts on workers.

Having recently gotten an email warning that my account will be “paused” from Taskrabbit for not performing enough tasks, I can testify to the strains the gig economy puts on a person. Software and automation will continue to squeeze out the rights of workers and organized labor ad infinitum in the search for greater profits, more power and limited regulation. We workers and, by association, the consumer will experience more accidents, unsafe working conditions, less pay, limited rights and fewer opportunities.

The major advantage of app-based freelance work is experienced by customers. The ease of access, rating systems and lack of oversight allow for the commodification of labor in ways that previous generations never had to bear the burden of. Almost all of the profit, meanwhile, is reaped by the technology owners, with the software platform monitoring much of the communication between consumer and worker — cutting out the individuals who previously managed and negotiated this labor exchange.

Taskrabbit's hiring system essentially forces us to accept tasks in order to promote the availability of taskers. Once we are hired we have 30 minutes to contact the customer and are basically on call until the task is complete.

Negative reviews are impossible to have stricken from one's user profile and can verge on character defamation. I was frequently on the receiving end of job requests that were flatout unsafe. Because I was at the mercy of the customers making the requests, I would have to perform them. Measuring up to the vague and opaque standards of the rating system outweighed my own safety and welfare.

Failure to meet Taskrabbits impossible-to-live-up-to standards results in the total devaluation of the worker. This is to say nothing of the competition its rating system engenders. It begs for oversight and review, since it essentially amounts to an arbitrary job evaluation.

Yet, not all of the jobs that I did were terrible. I frequently worked for companies that treated us taskers and their full-time employees with a great deal of respect, offered safe conditions and positive experiences. Often I left those jobs longing to go back and have that extra security, instead of moving onto the next thing, looking at my phone and wondering when the next job will come.

This article has been lightly edited for concision and clarity.

MEASURING UP TO THE VAGUE AND OPAQUE STANDARDS OF THE RATING SYSTEM OUTWEIGHED MY OWN SAFETY AND WELFARE.

A Daily Independent Global News Hour
with Amy Goodman
and Juan González

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John Nichols

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November 2016 **THE INDEPENDENT**

THAT'S NOT COOL

IN THE LAND OF PEACE, LOVE AND MUSIC, A FACTORY MAKES FANS FOR DRONES, BUT SOME LOCALS WANT TO KILL ITS BUZZ

BY JESSE RUBIN

WOODSTOCK, NY — On the 12th annual Woodstock Volunteers Day, residents gather in the Andy Lee Field for home-cooked food, folk songs and recognition of “what is good about [their] community.”

Two volunteers tabling for the environmental group Scenic Hudson ask for signatures and email addresses at the park entrance.

Tarak Kauff, a member of the antiwar group Veterans For Peace, lends his name to the environmentalist cause.

When Kauff presents the volunteers with his own petition, they hesitate. The petition, written by a group of local activists known as Woodstock Peace Economy, asks aerospace and military contractor Ametek Rotron to switch over all its production to civilian use. The 70-year-old company is the largest employer in this town of about 6,000 residents.

The two volunteers seem to hide behind their table. “Rotron?” one asks. “I thought they only made fans.”

Kauff tells them about the campaign and about the fans’ essential role in the functioning of F-16 fighter jets, cluster bombs and predator drones.

They decline and continue asking for signatures, some of which likely come from Rotron employees.

MILITARY CONTRACTS

In 2015 Ametek Rotron landed \$2.6 million in Pentagon contracts. Compared to Lockheed Martin — one of the largest defense companies in the world with declared revenues of \$46.1 billion the same year — this number is negligible.

But for a town that came to prominence as a haven for artists and later became synonymous with ’60s-era idealism and whose council declared it “drone free” in 2014 — any Pentagon dollars are incongruous.

So say activists affiliated with Woodstock Peace Economy who have recently renewed a long-running campaign against Rotron’s manufacture of weapons parts that dates back to the 1980s.

“Located in buildings just out of sight, off Rte. 375, Ametek Rotron makes high-tech fans, balls bearings and other essential parts for weapons used to terrorize and kill people the world over,” reads the group’s latest petition. “As most of us in Woodstock support peace and not war, the signers below request that Ametek Rotron explore how to convert its manufacturing facilities to support peace and not war.”

Route 375 is a main road into Woodstock — but before reaching the downtown, which trades on its image of a hippie haven — visitors must pass an inconspicuous white sign announcing the Rotron factory. While well established, it is unknown outside of the nearby Hudson Valley towns.

Founded in 1946 by Dutch engineer J. Constant van Rijn, the Rotron Manufacturing Company patented and developed high-intensity electronics cooling fans, which soon became critical for the burgeoning aerospace market of the 1950s.

By 1958 Rotron had developed the industry standard muffin fan, a powerful but quiet electronic cooling system. In tangent with his company’s success, Rijn became known as an arts patron in Woodstock. He is known for having contributed a heating plant to the Hudson Valley Repertory Theater so the famous playhouse could operate all year long.

He even “dedicated a statue of the buddha,” Woodstock Peace Economy activist, professor and longtime Woodstock resident Laurie Kirby told *The Independent*. “It’s the largest Buddha statue in North America.”

In 1961, the same year U.S. air and ground forces officially became active in Vietnam, Rotron developed and released the Mil-B-23071 standard for AC fans — the company’s first product strictly for military use.

The U.S. military uses an updated version of this fan to this day.

In the intervening years, as the United States has consolidated its position as arms merchant to the world, Woodstock’s largest employer has steadily increased its military business.

In 2015, Rotron secured 79 Pentagon contracts, its highest number ever, and logged record profits. On the whole, the U.S. armaments industry maintained its status as the largest in the world, accounting last year for 33 percent of global military exports, or \$455 billion, according to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), the financial branch of the Defense Department.

Meanwhile, the company is reluctant to admit its weapons industry involvement, instead insisting that it is merely a supplier of nonlethal technology. But research conducted by The Independent and activists confirms the inextricable link.

According to public Pentagon contracts, Rotron produces centrifugal fans for F-16s, Milstar satellite systems, CV-22 Osprey helicopters, long-range navy radar and M1A1 tanks.

Ametek Rotron, in addition, is the main supplier of the fuel density probe, a critical component in the operation of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) aircraft including the Predator Drone.

A leaked contract dated October 1, 2009, confirms Rotron supplied 50 fans to the Israeli Air Force that year.

The final destination of the fans remains unclear, but it is likely they operate in F-16s. In addition, a recently published Pentagon contract shows that Rotron provides a \$7,365 motor to the Israeli Defense Ministry, confirming the company’s ongoing direct business with that country’s government.

Because numerous human rights organizations criticize the Israeli military for using F-16s, especially in consecutive assaults on the besieged Gaza Strip, activists insist Rotron is complicit.

A 2015 report from the human rights group Amnesty International claims “there is strong evidence that Israeli forces committed war crimes” in the 2014 assault “in their relentless and massive bombardment of residential areas of Rafah,” a town in Gaza.

The Israeli Air Force used indiscriminate force against civilians, hospitals and first responders, the re-

port further states.

F-16s are also the aircraft of choice for Saudi Arabia’s U.S.-backed aggression in Yemen, where 10,000 people have been killed and three million displaced since March 2015 and half the population is on the brink of famine, according to a U.N. report. Recent U.S. retaliations on rebel-controlled areas of Yemen suggest the United States may be escalating its direct involvement in the war, beyond its current weapons sales, intelligence operations and refueling missions.

The Predator Drone, likewise, has been widely criticized for inflicting numerous indiscriminate civilian deaths in countries across the Middle East and North Africa.

According to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism — one of the few organizations that tracks casualties as a result of Obama administration’s covert drone war — thousands of civilians in Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia and Afghanistan have been killed by drone strikes in just a few years.

Yet Rotron adamantly denies any involvement in foreign conflicts; divorcing its manufacture of parts from the end systems those parts are used in.

“Rotron does not manufacture weapons,” Marie Tynan, a Rotron spokesperson told *The Independent*. “Our fans and blowers cool electronics. We make air circulation and radar systems, both commercial and military.”

But when pressed on specific military applications, Tynan declined to provide further explanation.

A DEBATE ERUPTS

Rotron has historically been quiet about its Pentagon contracts, but sustained pressure from activists seems to have opened an indirect line of communication in the letters page of the local Woodstock Times.

In a letter published July 21, 2016, Peter M. Stewart, general manager of Ametek Rotron, sought to dispel claims that Rotron is involved in human rights abuses across the world.

“Since Rotron was founded here in Woodstock over 60 years ago,” Stewart wrote emphatically, “to the best of my knowledge, not a single individual has ever been killed by any of its products!”

Tarak Kauff responded in his own letter: “I guess by [Stewart’s] reckoning, because Rotron makes only essential parts for drones, missiles and cluster bomb delivery systems and not the totality of these weapons, ‘no one has ever been killed’ by one of their products.”

“The cold, hard and uncomfortable facts are, however, that Rotron does make essential parts of drones, fighter planes, tanks and other weapons of destruction, which have been responsible for many deaths, mainly civilians,” wrote Kauff.

Some Woodstock residents choose to emphasize the practical benefits of Rotron’s presence.

“Rotron has all the things you want for a career: pensions, healthcare and benefits,” a Woodstock resident named Sophia told *The Independent*.

Describing herself as a “typical Woodstocker,” So-

phia, who declined to give her last name, added that Rotron not only makes the “fans in ambulance engines,” but it allows the local EMTs to park two ambulances and a fly car for the paramedic on duty at its facilities. Eleven of the 35 members of the ambulance squad work at Rotron.”

“Good-paying jobs are hard to find,” said Sophia, who suggested that those who object to Rotron’s weapons manufacturing must get a “dose of reality.”

Former vice president Stewart also addressed the jobs issue in his letter, warning that the jobs Rotron provides could easily be offshored, should the company terminate its lucrative Pentagon contracts.

“If Ametek Rotron no longer provided fans and blowers for military applications” Stewart wrote, “in all probability, the company would be relocated to Mexico or offshore due to cost considerations; and, Woodstock would lose a significant tax contributor, a good neighbor, a town supporter and hundreds of jobs.”

According to William Hartung, director of the Arms and Security Project, a nonprofit that studies the effects of the armaments industry on human rights globally, “there is a general tendency within the defense industry to play the jobs card as a way to resist change.”

“Usually companies in this industry exaggerate the jobs impact and exaggerate how dependent they are on contracts as a way to kind of maintain the status quo, keep the contracts flowing, divert criticism and so forth,” Hartung told *The Independent*.

RELUCTANT TO CRITICIZE

That resistance to criticism can be found in Woodstock’s town council whose members, with one exception, are reluctant to speak out against Rotron. On more than one occasion, members have said they would vote against any resolutions requesting that Rotron switch to production for civilian use.

The only holdout is Jay Wenk, a poet, World War II veteran and member of Veterans For Peace. He has long been part of the Woodstock Peace Economy campaign, leveraging his position on the town board to this end.

“People don’t walk around the streets thinking and feeling how it’s the center of making parts for drones that kill innocent children and so forth. It’s the town of peace and love — it’s more comfortable to be thinking that way,” Wenk told *The Independent*. “Because the other way puts us into the position of being complicit.”

The current petition campaign is by no means the first time activists have raised this issue.

In 2009 they held the second ever “Woodstock Forum” to expose Rotron’s involvement in the weapons industry — among other social and economic justice issues — coinciding with the 40th anniversary of the famous Woodstock festival.

Organizers brought antiwar activists, writers, professors and artists such as Mary Beth Sullivan of the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space; Jeff Cohen, author, professor and founder of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR); and award-winning investigative journalist Jeremy Scahill to speak at the forum.

Activists, most of whom are still involved in the campaign today, printed and distributed a satirical newspaper chronicling what an end to Rotron’s weapons manufacturing might look like.

In the short term, members of Woodstock Peace Economy seek 600 signatures, the equivalent of a tenth of the town’s population, enough, they hope, to bring company executives to the table to discuss conversion. If company officials won’t budge, however, activists will escalate their campaign, which could include engaging in civil resistance and other more militant tactics.

Broadly, “I think it’s important to open up a conversation about the way the material bases of our tenuous prosperity are bound up with war, oppression and environmental devastation,” said Laurie Kirby.

Kirby stressed that the weapons industry is so entrenched in the American landscape, not even a place steeped in the mythology of peace and love is immune.

There is a military-contracted manufacturer in every single one of the country’s 435 congressional districts.

“It’s well known that the Pentagon makes sure that the largesse reaches all parts of the country,” Kirby said.

“Woodstock is really not special — Woodstock is really a microcosm of the world,” he lamented. “Despite what some people think about it being antithetical and whatever else, we’re just a typical community and every community has this.”

At \$596 billion in 2015, the U.S. military budget is larger than the next seven countries combined, meaning the profit potential for private contractors like Rotron is immense.

In order to resist the Pentagon’s allure, “[Rotron] would need to see examples of peaceful production happening in other places because I feel like where they are now, they are probably making a lot more money making parts for weapons,” Sequoia Cohen, student and anti-drone activist told *The Independent*. “So they need to see that they can still be profitable making other things.”

BEING FOR PEACE

William Hartung noted that there is already precedent for lucrative defense contractors to convert their production.

“There’s been big waves like after Vietnam, after the Cold War, tens of thousands of companies had to reorient their business and some do and some don’t. But usually the ones who are successful think ahead a little bit about what their options may be,” Hartung said. “Not just dig their heels in and focus on getting more military contracts.”

In downtown Woodstock on a sunny August afternoon, Tarak Kauff continues asking locals and tourists for petition signatures.

A man in his 20s, garbed in peace signs and colorful beads, politely declines the petition, but not before saying he closely identifies with the antiwar movement.

This disparity between a peaceful lifestyle and actual peace, Kauff later noted, is a familiar response.

“You claim you’re for peace, so for peace we have to look at all the elements that go towards destroying the peace,” Kauff said. “It’s one thing to know the truth, it’s another thing to act on what you know.”

“You can’t be for peace and do nothing to achieve it.”



ROB LAQUINTA

THESE ARMS ARE NOT FOR HUGGING

Saudi airstrikes killed 140 mourners and wounded 500 more at a funeral in Sana’a, Yemen, on Oct. 8. With U.S. support, the kingdom is waging a bloody air campaign across its border against Iranian-backed Houthi insurgents that began in March of last year. More than a third of the targets it has struck are civilian.

“U.S. security cooperation with Saudi Arabia is not a blank check,” said White House spokesman Ned Price, who expressed “serious concerns about the conflict in Yemen and how it has been waged.”

But the latest massacre comes less than a month after the U.S. Senate rejected a measure, 71 to 21, that would have blocked a \$1.15 billion arms deal between the Obama Administration and the Saudis. The

arms package follows a \$1.3 billion deal in November of 2015. Both are part a \$22.2 billion sales bundle authorized with Riyadh since the war began, most of which is still to be delivered.

While Price says the White House is reviewing its support for the Saudi campaign, documents published by the Reuters news organization this month show from the start State Department attorneys fretted the U.S. could be considered a “co-belligerent” actor in the conflict and be held liable under United Nations war crimes statutes.

Human rights organizations estimate 3,800 civilians have died as a result of Saudi bombardments, so far.

— INDYPENDENT STAFF

PAYBACK TIME

IMMIGRANT VOTERS PREPARE TO THUMP TRUMP

BY ELIZA RELMAN

When Mayra Aldás-Deckert moved to the U.S. from her home in Ecuador in 2005, she, along with the rest of her family, was undocumented.

“We moved here, like everybody else, with a hope that my sisters and I would have a better future, a better education...better economic opportunities,” she said.

For seven years, Aldás-Deckert lived in the shadows. In 2012, she married an American and got a green card, which gave her permanent residency status. Last December, at the age of 31, she became a citizen. She cast her first vote in an American election in the New York State primaries in April.

“It was so empowering...because I come from a country that as soon as you turn 18, you have to vote. I’ve always wanted to do that... now I can,” Aldás-Deckert said. “I can do it for my sisters, I can do it for my family, I can do it for the rest of the undocumented community that are still waiting for comprehensive immigration reform that will benefit them.”

Almost a million people have applied for U.S. citizenship since the beginning of 2016. This marks a 23 percent increase over the same period in 2015. Citizenship applications are historically higher in election years, and this year, between October 2015 and June 2016, applications were up 8 percent over the same period in 2012. Many immigration advocates across the country tie Donald Trump’s anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric to the rise in applications.

Aldás-Deckert is now a community engagement coordinator at the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), an advocacy organization that represents over 200 groups working with immigrants, refugees, and asylees. She says that fear of a Trump presidency has motivated many of New York’s Latinx residents to become citizens and voters.

“I know personal stories of people who had the green card for 10, 15 years — they kept renewing it, thinking ‘I’m fine with the green card, I’m afraid of the test, I don’t speak English, I don’t have the money,’” Aldás-Deckert said. “This is pushing them, this immigrant rhetoric is pushing them to become citizens, to say, ‘no, you don’t get to talk about my community like that.’”

A combination of her admiration for Hillary Clinton and her deep dislike of Donald Trump motivated Patricia Pavez to become a U.S. citizen and register to vote in this election. Pavez, who has lived in New York City since moving from her native Chile in 1978, said that the stakes in this presidential election are higher than she’s ever seen them, both for the U.S. and the rest of the world.

“Everybody in Chile, everybody in Latin America has their eyes on the United States, the whole world is looking at this election,” Pavez said. “That is maybe why I’m motivated to participate. I feel my country and family is sitting there and watching.”

BACKLOG

Due to the spike in citizenship applications and a lack of preparedness at the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), almost 500,000 residents nationwide are currently awaiting answers on their applications.

New York City’s Public Advocate, Letitia James, is calling on President Obama to provide emergency support to USCIS to speed the review of applications, 60,000 of which belong to New York City resi-

dents.

“Not only do these individuals deserve their citizenship, their absolute, indisputable right to live in this country, but they deserve the right to vote,” James said at a press conference on October 5.

NYIC communications manager Thanu Yakupitiyage called the backlog “disheartening” and hypocritical, noting that the White House Task Force on New Americans has actively encouraged lawful permanent residents to apply for citizenship.

“USCIS has the power to hasten these applications,” Yakupitiyage said. “The White House itself were the ones who called for immigrants to become citizens, and so they really need to do something.”

Meanwhile, Trump has accused the federal government of fast-tracking citizenship applications before the election to get more immigrants to the polls to vote for Democrats. In early October, he told a meeting of the National Border Patrol Council, “They’re letting people pour into the country so they can go and vote.”

POWER OUTSIDE OF VOTING

While the majority of New York City’s three million foreign-born residents are citizens, about 500,000 are undocumented. Roksana Mun is an organizer with Desis Rising Up and Moving, a group with almost 3,000 predominantly South Asian and Indo-Caribbean members, the majority of whom either have green cards or are undocumented. Mun says that much work remains to be done to help non-voting residents play more active roles in shaping policy.

“Organizing becomes the way our communities are able to have a voice and get their power, outside of being a voting bloc,” Mun said. But she added that many, particularly undocumented individuals, do not have the time or resources to be civically or politically engaged, “Pretty much all of our members work ten, fourteen hour shifts, seven days a week.”

Mun noted that many struggle to see meaningful differences between candidates and political parties in their policies surrounding immigration, racial justice, and workers’ rights.

“Regardless of Trump’s rhetoric and Clinton’s rhetoric, the practice is that deportations are still continuing even under a progressive president like Obama,” Mun said. “For them, rhetoric is one thing, but they understand the practice of that is already happening.”

Aber Kawas, the youth lead organizer at the Arab American Association of New York, works with undocumented individuals to engage them in policy advocacy efforts. The Association holds workshops on the fight for the \$15 minimum wage, immigrants’ rights while interacting with law enforcement, and how to be involved in the public education system.

“We don’t want voting to be the primary focus for people. We want to talk about the many ways that you can be politically engaged,” Kawas said.

LANGUAGE ACCESS

In July, Mayor Bill de Blasio expanded the number of languages that voter registration forms are translated into from 11 to 16. Eighty percent of citizens with limited English proficiency should now have ac-



ELIZA RELMAN



JOHN TARLETON

BUREAUCRACY VS. DEMOCRACY: NYC Public Advocate Leticia James (center) speaks as immigrant rights activists rally at City Hall on Oct. 5 to demand the federal government speed up its processing of citizenship applications.

NO PASARÁN: Almost four decades after immigrating to the US, Patricia Pavez got her citizenship this year so that she could vote against Donald Trump.

Continued on page 15

VOTE SWAPPING

NEW APP BRINGS TOGETHER VOTERS ACROSS STATE LINES

BY BIANCA FORTIS

Vote swapping is one method progressive voters are using to help ease their consciences this election. It allows them to be pragmatic without entirely surrendering their progressive principles. The idea of strategic vote swapping debuted during the 2000 election, when “Nader Trader” websites popped up on the internet. The legality of websites was challenged but the courts ruled that vote pairing is protected as a form of free speech.

The goal of the Nader Trader sites was to help Ralph Nader, running on the Green Party line, secure the 5 percent of the popular vote required to be eligible for federal matching funds without pulling votes away from Al Gore in swing states. It didn’t work — but it’s worth trying again, according to John Stubbs and Ricardo Reyes, who are behind the #NeverTrump app. They’re also the brains behind Republicans for Clinton, a group whose sole goal is to defeat Donald Trump.

Although they’ve been encouraging conservative voters, particularly those inclined to vote for Gary Johnson, to use the app, Stubbs said they’re interested in “anyone and everyone who believes that Donald Trump should not be president” — including disillusioned millennials and Green Party supporters who favor Stein. “It’s about recognizing that in an election when it’s going to come down to two people, voting for Stein or voting for Johnson. . . does the same thing — nothing,” he said.

In Canada, vote swapping may actually have swung the vote last year in favor of now-Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in a hard-fought three-way race, Stubbs said. Voters don’t need to use the app or find a stranger to swap votes with, Stubbs added. If they connect with individuals they already know who happen to live in swing states, that works too.


One of the main challenges to vote swapping is that it relies on the honor system. In theory, a swapper could renege on a promise to vote for a certain candidate, or even trade votes with multiple unsuspecting individuals, resulting in even more votes for his or her candidate of choice.

New York City author and activist Gan Golan published a tongue-in-cheek article on the blog site medium.com that advocated for a more extreme version of vote pairing, which he coined the “VOTE-4-ACTION Swap,” and which requires liberals to actively protest in exchange for a Clinton vote cast by a radical.

“To fulfill their oath, the Liberal has to actually get beaten and/or arrested while protesting so please be patient as it may take more than one try,” Golan writes. “To ensure the integrity of this agreement, the Radical gets their new Liberal BFF’s personal phone number, email and home address and is granted the full legal right to harass them until they show up in the streets.”

Golan said the idea was borne of frustration when he saw Hillary voters using the threat of a Trump presidency to blackmail Bernie Sanders supporters into supporting her — essentially asking progressives to vote for Hillary without giving anything in return.

IT’S A WAY TO VOTE STRATEGICALLY WITHOUT COMPROMISING YOUR IDEALS, ASSUMING THE OTHER PERSON IS BEING HONEST.





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Frances Fox Piven
Social theorist, welfare rights activist, and political science professor at C.U.N.Y.



Opal Tometi
Co-Founder of Black Lives Matter and Executive Director of the Black Alliance for Just Immigration

Granny Peace Brigade
An anti-war demonstration group in New York City made up of women dedicated to the goal of peace with justice domestically and globally



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ELECTION VIEWS

For many on the left, the upcoming presidential vote marks the grim conclusion to a once-promising election season that saw a self-described socialist win the support of millions of Americans. The two remaining major party candidates are a Wall Street-friendly corporatist who would be the first woman to sit in the Oval Office and a man who has been called “abhorrent”, “a malignant clown” and “utterly unqualified” and that’s just by members of his own party. To help us make sense of the moment, we invited several guest contributors to share their thoughts.

SUPPORT HILLARY, THEN FIGHT LIKE HELL **IT’S HARD TO DO, BUT IT’S THE RIGHT MOVE**

BY ETHAN YOUNG

Bernie Sanders supporters got some bitter lessons in Democratic Party politics in 2016. The first was that the primaries could be used as a platform for left politics. Sanders’ amazing success in reaching millions of people with a strong left-populist message almost made political revolution look easy.

Then we found out that concessions don’t get handed out like goody bags. The Democratic National Committee leadership’s ties to big capital are strong. Even those assumed to be friendly, like Donna Brazile (strong black woman!) or Barney Frank (gay pioneer!) preferred to bust our balloons than favor us over powerful corporate interests.

But concessions were made, because we made it clear that we wouldn’t go away. Those concessions were words on a party platform, barely promises. But for fresh-out-of-nowhere campaigners, even making the DNC blink was no little feat.

Then came the bitterest drop of reality: Hillary Clinton was the nominee. That meant her election was all that stood against Donald Trump. And THAT meant we would be forced to choose someone we didn’t want, even hated, to head off a result that would open the floodgates of a fascist insurgency.

Some of us refused to accept that last drop. We pressed our mouths tightly shut and shook our heads. No lesser evil. Vote for what you want, even if you won’t get it. Show the two-party system we’re not quitters. Those parts of the left that have always been ideologically committed to the view that real progressive politics only begins with rejecting all Democrats used this turn of events to feather their various political nests.

Most of us have absorbed this reality, as nasty as it tastes. We will have a very hard time surviving if the Trump campaign becomes a government-backed armed movement. We will not build a stronger left, and come out of our decades-long state of decrepitude, fragmentation, and political incoherence, if things get radically worse as a result of Trump taking over. More likely, we will be reduced to long-term defensive action, as whole communities, labor unions, and religious assemblies come under physical attack. This is what happens when a party in crisis – the post-W Republicans – reverts to a default mode of full-on white supremacy.

The left is broader than revolutionaries and hardcore activists. We also include liberals and pacifists, union members and feminists, by spirit if not action. Some of them supported Clinton from the start, either as the gender groundbreaker or as the anti-Trump. The problem, though, is that Clinton’s record shows a governing style that involves big favors for big money, and small carrots and sticks for everyone else. Ignoring that reality, or perfuming it for the sake of campaign spirit, leads to broken hearts and futility.

The Sanders campaign raised basic, crucial issues and made them plain for everyone to consider. His excellent

political instincts took him to the social movements that had come together and promoted solutions for them. Every one of those issues remains on the table. Now it’s our move. The left must grow up fast and get it together before the next extreme winter. This requires several improvements in our approach to politics.

- *United fronts are necessary, but hard to build. They mean more than just putting names on a leaflet or agreeing on a list of demands. Leaders need to drop fights over turf and funding or old scores, and figure out how they can work together for common goals. Activists have to share ideas, information, and skills with each other, and interact across lines of geographic distance and area of work. Political and movement leaders won’t automatically take this position. They must be won to it.*
- *Having a united front means coordinated political action by people involved in both social movements and electoral campaigns. It’s not about this or that candidate, but about the real solutions that came forward during the 2016 campaign. Sanders supporters are well acquainted with these. But we need to turn to Clinton supporters, many of whom agreed with Sanders’ positions but opposed him for pragmatic reasons. They have no objection to single-payer health care, free higher education, a \$15 minimum wage now, defending black lives, ending neoliberal free trade pacts, and so on. After the election, Clinton supporters’ attention can be shifted to joining the fight for these demands.*
- *By building off public demand for these reforms, united front action can pressure those in power and work to unseat Republicans and corporate Democrats. This can be accomplished through independent campaigns or local Democratic clubs, depending on the circumstances.*
- *We have to organize not as ideologues for our favorite doctrine, but with outreach as our number-one priority. Every street is full of people who would welcome an honest alternative. They don’t need missionaries, but small-d democrats. This kind of organizing is already happening every day, but not in the context of a broad united front, and not with the shared goal of both pushing for change and electing agents of change.*
- *We don’t have television, but thank the tech gods for the Internet. We can utilize social*



MARY DORE



VOTE JILL STEIN FOR PRESIDENT AND BREAK WITH THE TWO- PARTY SYSTEM

BY URSULA ROZUM

Why should people vote for Jill Stein for President instead of choosing the “lesser evil,” and why is this an effective way for the Left to build power?

“It is better to vote for what you want and not get it than to vote for what you don’t want and get it,” as Eugene Debs said. My vote for Stein, the Green Party candidate, is a simple choice to support the candidate whose values and positions overwhelmingly represent my own. But I realize the choice isn’t so easy for those who are weighing whether to vote for Stein or choose the lesser evil of Hillary Clinton in order to defeat Donald Trump, the boorish incarnation of society’s most disgusting and violent attitudes.

A Pew poll taken in mid-September found that overwhelmingly, voters on both sides of the aisle are choosing the lesser evil. The main reason respondents cited for supporting Trump or Clinton was dislike of the other major-party candidate. Given the high level of dissatisfaction with the choices put forward by the corporate duopoly, 2016 could be the year that independent parties, in particular the Green Party, make strides.

Voters are increasingly sick of the policies of war and Wall Street embraced by corporate Democrats like Barack Obama, and Hillary and Bill Clinton. Yet there is tremendous propaganda pressuring leftists to swallow their pride and vote for Hillary Clinton, despite her political record.

The most belabored meme is that Green Ralph Nader cost Democrat Al Gore the 2000 election, electing George W. Bush and leading to the Iraq War. This scare tactic ignores many important factors: A media review a year after the election found that a full recount would have resulted in a Gore win, but the Gore campaign demanded only a partial recount; that the Supreme Court stopped the recount by a 5-4 decision along party lines; that Bush is estimated to have won the votes of more than 300,000 Florida Democrats; and that half of all registered Democrats did not even bother voting. As it does with Jill Stein today, the Democratic

Party made Nader and the Greens into the scapegoats.

Why vote for Stein and the Greens instead of a lesser-evil Clinton vote in order to stop the “fascists”? Because we must stop giving legitimacy to the political elites of the two corporate parties, including the Democrats. Their policies have created the crises that surround us — the climate crisis, the jobs crisis, the student debt crisis that has 43 million of us trapped in endless monthly payments, and militarized policing instead of anti-poverty policies.

While social change won’t happen solely through elections, they serve as a measure of popular will, and can be a tool for bringing issues and solutions into the public discourse. Though third parties in the U.S. face a political Mount Everest, competing under conditions and rules designed to exclude them, the Green Party has learned to navigate and challenge the undemocratic nature of the electoral system.

The Sanders campaign demonstrated that there is a mass base for progressive policies. The higher the vote for Stein and the Green Party, the more leverage progressive movements can have against the political establishment, because it will not be able to take our support for granted.

The Greens’ infrastructure needs to catch up with the public demand for a progressive alternative. If Stein wins 5% of the vote, the party would qualify for general election public funding in 2020 that will be worth over \$10 million, which would significantly boost its organizing capacity. In 37 states, the results will also determine whether the Greens get an automatic ballot line for the next two or four years, though in New York the ballot line is determined by the results of the governor’s race which will next be held in 2018. Those lines would enable the independent left to run competitive and winnable races at the local level, which is how it can develop into a national electoral force.

What will it mean if the only third party that wins 5% is the Libertarian Party? If popular discontent with the status quo of corporate rule is consolidated in the growth of a party that be-

MARY HOUSE



CAT’S OUT OF THE BAG I CAN’T SUPPORT ANY OF THE TWO-LEGGED CANDIDATES

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

After careful consideration, I have decided to write in my niece’s cat for President.

I would obviously act differently if I lived in Ohio or North Carolina, but Hillary Clinton will almost certainly do next to nothing to fix the biggest problem facing the United States: The economy is broken, twisted in favor of the rich. For millions of Americans, there is no longer any relationship between having the desire and skills to work and being able to make a living. There is no longer any security that working will make you able to afford a place to live.

Clinton offers only vague, token solutions to those problems—mostly initiatives to give a few more people the chance to enter the upper-middle class, and a slightly higher floor under the lower-working class. The \$12-an-hour minimum wage she supports might reduce the number of hours of work needed to afford a one-room apartment in New York’s poorest neighborhoods from 120 to 100. She represents the “responsible” wing of the 1%. The main argument to vote for her is the traditional “if you don’t, the horrible evil Republicans will pack the Supreme Court!”

Donald Trump really is that horrible and evil, though. He represents the irresponsible wing of the 1%. His wife-beater style of debate, indiscriminately spraying accusations, insults, and politically slanted lies like a man with a piece of lint stuck in his urethra, is so ignorant and obnoxious that it actually makes me want to vote for Clinton. Yes, I would rather drink corporate-Democrat urine than the toxic waste of a racist blowhard con artist’s personality cult.

Trump taps into the anger of people screwed by the economy of the last generation, such as those told by the Clinton Democrats of the ’90s, “your jobs being shipped to low-wage countries is the price of progress, but we’ll bring you into the future by giving you an eight-week class in Microsoft Excel.” But his few actual policy proposals are the well-worn scam that cutting taxes and regulations on the rich will bring

unprecedented prosperity to America. He has a long record of stiffing people who worked for him, from the undocumented Polish laborers who erected the Trump Tower to the architects and contractors who designed and built his casinos. Thinking Trump will really help working people is as stupid as believing that not vaccinating your kids for diphtheria will make them healthier.

There are millions of people in America who are that fucking stupid.

Not all of Trump’s supporters are bigoted bullies, and it is usually unfair to judge a political cause by its most extreme supporters. It is still highly unlikely that an obvious heterosexual showing up at an “LGBT for Hillary” rally would get punched in the face by someone screaming, “Fuck you, breeder!”

The only reason to vote for Trump would be out of a nihilistic-hedonist fantasy, like that if a nuclear missile were headed for New York, you could load up on an LSD-OxyContin cocktail and watch the fireworks with an appropriately don’t-give-a-toss attitude.

Speaking of drugs, Libertarian Gary Johnson is one of the few American politicians with an honest stance on the issue. He doesn’t talk evasive rubbish about having “experimented” with marijuana; he says, “I smoked it.” Getting drunk in a bar is legal, he argues, but driving drunk isn’t—so why shouldn’t the law be the same for pot?

On the other hand, the Libertarian party platform is like a Yiddish curse for aging potheads. Yes, you’ll be able to buy weed legally, but you won’t be able to afford it, not without Social Security you won’t. (Johnson personally advocates just shrinking Social Security, by converting it from a universal entitlement to a means-tested welfare program and raising the retirement age.) And when you get pneumonia from sleeping outside (no rent controls or subsidized housing either) and go to the emergency room without Medicare, all you’ll get is a lecture on “personal responsibility.”

Green Party candidate Jill Stein has one brilliant idea: A “Green New

MALIKA DUGGAN

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DRIFTING TO DONALD

TRUMP’S BEST CHANCE OF AN UPSET VICTORY LIES WITH WORKING CLASS COMMUNITIES LIKE THIS ONE

TEXT & PHOTOS BY PETER RUGH

PHILADELPHIA — “I cannot possibly support Hillary Clinton,” said Kimberly Martin. The barking of her numerous pit bulls, perhaps sensing that there was one of those depraved journalists about, alerted her to my presence. When she stepped out of her front door to figure out why I was taking photographs of her Donald Trump posters, we got to talking.

Martin was forced to close her construction company in 2014 “because of all the hardships the government puts on small businesses” and has been unemployed since. “Trump’s a businessman,” she said, expressing fidelity with the Republican presidential candidate. “I like his economic package.” If she were still operating her company, Martin would “go down and put a bid on that wall” Trump has proposed constructing along the U.S./Mexico border. “I hope he builds it 20 feet high. It’s not because I’m a racist or a bigot, and it’s not because I don’t like Mexicans. I have friends of every color, creed and sexuality. But if you are going to immigrate, do it right.”

Clinton’s speeches to Wall Street, her use of a private email server while Secretary of State, NAFTA and Bill Clinton’s evasion of prosecution after repeated allegations of sexual misconduct were among the additional reasons Martin cited for turning to Trump. These might seem like disparate complaints, but each underscored her perception that the Clintons are part of the global elite and have given fodder to Trump’s anti-establishment message.

Martin is hardly an outlier in the white, working-class enclaves of Philadelphia, including Port Richmond, where we met. Many in this Polish and Irish neighborhood see a Trump vote as a big, whopping, necessary “fuck you” to politicians on both sides of the aisle who they feel have abandoned them.

A TRADITIONALLY DEMOCRATIC NEIGHBORHOOD

Port Richmond has traditionally voted Democratic in national elections, but touring the area in early October with local education activists, it was apparent that that is about to change. Though the activists knocked on doors of registered Democrats, the most frequent response I received when I asked which way voters were leaning in the national election was either “Trump” or “I don’t know” — code, explained one of the group’s lead organizers, Lev Hirschhorn, for “I’m voting for Trump but don’t want to admit it.”

The ambiguity of such responses from these denizens of the white working class just might spell a surprise victory for Trump in Pennsylvania, where the state’s 20 electoral college votes will play a pivotal role in deciding our next president. Think of the results of the Brexit referendum or the peace plebiscite

in Colombia recently. Pollsters misread cues from conservative-minded voters too embarrassed to admit publicly which way they planned to cast their ballots.

A litany of behaviors exhibited by the Donald fly in the face of what most consider common decency — racism, bragging of sexual assault, insulting disabled people and former POWs. Nonetheless, Trump’s economic populism has resonated in Port Richmond, with its long blocks of row housing. Here oil trains roll by down the road from playgrounds and the windows of the local Charles Carroll High School are covered in plywood. Amid the American flags, shamrocks and crucifixes that adorn front porches, “Make America Great Again” posters have cropped up. In one car window, someone took one of the “love trumps hate” placards that littered the city when the Democrats hosted their national convention in Philadelphia in July and folded it to read, “love trump.”

Walter Benjamin’s famous bon mot, “Behind every fascism is a failed revolution,” comes to mind, given that the white working class also composed a large segment of Bernie Sanders’ political revolution.

“You have to understand, when people vote they don’t just examine platforms independently of the institutions that mediate their lives,” said Judith Stein, a labor historian at the City College of New York. “The black working class’s view of the world is mediated through political operatives who have been linked to the Democratic Party for the past 30 or 40 years — church leaders, nonprofit leaders, black politicians.” By contrast, white workers are, in many respects, institutionally unmoored. That’s long been the case in the southern United States but is a relatively new phenomena in the North where traditions of trade unionism have tied blue-collar whites to the Democratic Party, at least until now. “I heard from steel union leaders that at locals in Ohio they were debating between Sanders and Trump,” Stein said.

But Sanders is out of the picture.

On one hand, narratives that demonize, cheer or patronize the white working class for Trump’s ascent are oversimplifications, given research from the Gallup polling organization that indicates Trump has an even higher number of supporters among the middle class. And whites overall are a shrinking voting block. They will account for 69 percent of the vote in this election, down from 87 percent in 1992. Whites as a percentage of the working class have also shrunk as America’s demographics have shifted.

Nevertheless, 2014 census data indicates that 44.4 percent of whites earn less than \$50,000 a year and those blue-collar votes will still have a significant impact on the election. As political demographer Ruy Teixeira put it to the *New Yorker* earlier this year: “If [Trump’s] populist message boosts turnout and margins with working-class white voters high enough in the Rust Belt and Upper Midwest, you could see

a situation where someone like Trump could carry Ohio, Iowa, Wisconsin, maybe Pennsylvania. That would put a real dent in the Democratic coalition.”

Trump’s support in Port Richmond and nationally among blue-collar whites also illustrates the challenges Berniecrats, heeding Sanders’ call to “transform our country from the bottom up” face. Before they can transform the country they’ll have to transform their party, which, since the first Clinton administration has taken a turn toward what Stein describes as “neoliberalism with a human face,” away from the New Deal politics that appeal to the working-class electorate Sanders represented a return to.

Rather than change minds for Clinton, the activists I shadowed in Philadelphia, members of the nascent 215 People’s Alliance, are appealing to voters on issues closer to home. (215 is a reference to the city’s area code.) They’re seeking to wrest control of their public schools from the widely-loathed School Reform Commission (SRC), established to run Philadelphia’s school district by the state in 2001.

“There’s a lot of things wrong in the neighborhood that need work and this is a good way to get things started,” 25-year-old Shane Razzi told me. Like many of the canvassers I spoke with, most of whom were former Bernie staffers or volunteers, Sanders’ message of economic justice got Razzi involved in politics. He even drove out West to volunteer for Sanders ahead of the California primary in June. But when I asked if he was supporting Clinton, Razzi demurred. He’s not a Trump supporter, like his neighbors, and he wasn’t making any political calculation: Razzi just can’t muster the same enthusiasm for Clinton that he had for the democratic socialist. “I’m focusing on the local stuff,” he said.

Razzi’s grandfather was born in 1926 just around the corner from Powers Park, where Razzi and a dozen other 215 Alliance organizers met up to canvass Port Richmond with a petition that calls for dismantling the SRC. Razzi was raised in the neighborhood, too. “It was pretty rough,” he told me. “Our science class was just our teacher handing us a piece of paper to draw on from kindergarten until fifth grade.”

FAILING SCHOOLS

A democratically elected school board would offer locals a chance to have a say in how their children are educated. Board members held accountable to voters would be less likely to close neighborhood schools or demand givebacks from the teachers union. Since taking over the district in 2001, when the city faced a \$216.7 million deficit in its education budget thanks to decades of underfunding, the SRC has put Philadelphia schools under an austerity regime that has only exacerbated pre-existing problems — overcrowding, understaffing and program

cuts. Dozens of neighborhood schools have been shut down, replaced by charters or sold off as real estate.

Yet, for Philadelphia to have a say in how its children are educated it will have to change who’s in the state capital by electing legislators who will dissolve the SRC.

A Republican and charter school advocate, John Taylor, has represented Port Richmond in Harrisburg since 1984. Despite some shady and unpopular backroom dealings, like slipping a provision that expands charter schools in Philadelphia into a cigarette tax bill two years ago, he’s held onto his seat through a mixture of old-school patronage — offering Port Richmond’s struggling residents jobs with the city’s parking authority — and by performing genuinely helpful constituent services. Resident after resident who I spoke with in Port Richmond praised Taylor for halting industrial rezoning on their block or helping them boot drug dealers (opioid addiction is widespread in the area) from their corners. Thus the neighborhood, while traditionally voting Democrat at the top of the ballot, has supported Taylor in election after election.

The 215 People’s Alliance is asking voters who sign their petition to dismantle the SRC to support Taylor’s Democratic rival, Joe Hohenstein.

“With Trump being such a divisive figure, we’re working to have a strong local campaign that shores up the Democratic base so that there isn’t any ticket splitting,” Hohenstein, who stopped by to glad-hand the canvassers in Powers Park, told me.

Yet, Hohenstein isn’t exactly a paragon of Sanders’ political revolution that was the inspiration for many of the people going door-to-door for him. He supported Clinton in the Democratic primaries and is in favor of charter schools, with the caveat that they are held accountable and don’t come at the expense of public schools. Basically, he considers himself a moderate.

“Being drawn to someone who says, ‘I want something different,’ we have to be careful,” Hohenstein said. “This goes to Bernie’s vision of populism as well as Trump’s. If you go down the alphabet, you can’t go from A to B to K. You have to take your steps through. There’s always been people who say, ‘Oh yeah, we need a revolution.’ But if you are going to overthrow a system, where essentially you create a new alphabet, there are going to be steps that get lost.”

REPACKAGING THE STATUS QUO

Granted, moderation isn’t as dramatic or sexy as revolution. It’s also code for the status quo, which hasn’t been too kind to the people of Port Richmond or the working class in the United States at large in the last several decades.

In large part that’s thanks to policies Bill Clinton’s administration championed — NAFTA, the dismantling of welfare, harsher penalties for nonviolent drug offenses, Wall Street deregulation and the promulgation of charter schools. These days the path to a college education for America’s poor and working-class is narrower than ever. Wages have stagnated and there are fewer jobs to go around, particularly in manufacturing, once a boon to places like Port Richmond, where there are more than six million fewer manufacturing jobs available than in the 1980s. All this has put a strain on the social fabric of working-class communities and created ample ground for a prescription drug epidemic and Trump’s populism to take root.

Ironically, much of Trump’s support in Port Richmond is non-ideological. Kimberly Martin, for instance, said she “absolutely” supports local control of schools. While we were on the subject of education, she added that her daughter recently graduated college. “I just watched a rally of Hillary’s where she talked about free college tuition for families making under a \$125,000 a year. Let me tell you, we are deep in debt. I support that.”

UNDECIDED: A voter listens to Lev Hirschhorn of the 215 People’s Alliance in Port Richmond, Oct. 8.

STARS, STRIPES AND PIT BULLS: Kimberly Martin on her stoop. Those are the names of police officers killed in Dallas, Texas on July 8 taped to her front door.

WHAT NEXT?: 215 Canvassers Hirschhorn and Shane Razzi take a break inside a Port Richmond convenience store.

SCHOOL’S OUT FOREVER: This property, formerly a high school, can be purchased at PHLschoolsales.com.

PAIN IS PAIN

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

“You’re not listening to me.” He gripped the steering wheel. “What the hell am I not hearing?” I stared at my friend Terrence, who stared at the road as we drove in silence. He blurted, “White guys feel like they’re always wrong. I’m white. Listen to me. I know. We’re being yelled at by everyone.”

I drew a line down my cheek, “White tears.” The quiet in the van grew like a gasoline bubble. Just one spark. He parked, looked at me and said, “Boo hoo,” mock crying. We laughed. But our epic talks on race and politics took a turn when Trump went on a winning streak. I began to listen to his warning. A huge swath of White America was scared, cornered, cheated, insulted and left behind. When they looked in the mirror, they saw white as the new black.

THE STRONGMAN

The Strongman cometh. He’s Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines. He’s Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, Vladimir Putin in Russia and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Egypt. He’s lurking in the ranks of the nationalist parties rising in France and Austria. Here, he is Donald Trump: the Cinnamon Hitler, the Groper.

Terrence and I watched him on TV. His puckered face and excuse-me-waitress forefingers. Trump soaked himself in the rage of Whitest America, lighting it on fire and spewing it from his lips like a circus fire-breather. He was a joke, until he wasn’t.

Today’s strongmen are not militarized goons like Uganda’s Idi Amin but Armani-wearing, fascist clowns like Italy’s Silvio Berlusconi. They mock liberal, middle-class sensibilities on behalf of a betrayed working class. The more they insult the establishment and are insulted back, the stronger they grow.

I didn’t see it. My leftist politics values the suffering of the poor and their redemption as class warriors, not as people who want to identify with leaders, who want power, who want to be the heroes of their national mythology. It struck me while watching *Superman v Batman*. In it, the villain Doomsday is a monster who gets stronger the more you hit it.

Afterwards I called Terrence. “I think Trump is from outer space. I think he’s an alien who gets stronger the more you insult him.”

“You may have it backwards,” he said. “Trump lovers think he’s saving them from you. For his supporters, you’re the monster.”

CRACK PARK

“White people are really conscious about being white,” he said as we stood in his apartment, which overlooked a tiny patch of green called “Crack Park” where homeless people slept in tents. They stumbled out each morn-

ing to get liquor from the store. By noon, they were passed out on the sidewalk like thrown-away dolls. I stepped over them when opening the door. Drug dealers stood nervously at corners. Prostitutes waved at passing cars. Everyone was black. Terrence was one of the few whites in the neighborhood. They watched him as he walked to the store, always asked him for money and sometimes heckled him.

“I get it, I really do,” Terrence said, “Everyone thinks I’m the problem. Out here, I’m seen as part of the system that ruined their lives. They don’t know me. They just see white. They don’t know I’m struggling too. And I am. But it’s not the same. I have things they never had. You know, one of the ladies out there said to me, ‘you must have really disappointed your family to end up here with us.’ I was really hurt.”

“Damn bro,” I shook my head. “Damn.”

I looked at my friend. I’d known him almost 20 years. He knew me when I had 4-foot-long dreads. He has these large feel-your-soul eyes and endless energy. He was a metal worker and his hands were often dark from soldering metal at his shop. He drummed, live looped and deejayed at parties. He protested Republicans. Total Bay Area man.

He was like a brother to me. We’d go on road trips, opening our lives up like origami, revealing new shapes and meanings to our lives. I trusted him. And I knew he was being ground down by the hateful stares on the street.

“You know, there’s this white man, Mark, a waiter at this restaurant I eat at on the way to Burning Man. Sweetest guy. We talk once a year. He’s old and works way too much. I wonder, what’s going to happen to him.” I sighed. “My whole life I’ve been taught to be loyal to black pain and be indifferent to white pain. It feels small though. There’s something larger than all of us that’s causing this...”

Two homeless men began cursing right below the window. It got loud. “Oh God.” I rubbed my temples. “I’m tired of feeling guilt. It’s like someone took a ship from the Middle Passage and cracked it like an egg over the street.”

“That’s intense,” he said.

“Can I be white,” I asked him, “So I don’t feel this black middle-class guilt?”

“Oh that won’t help,” he laughed. “Believe me.”

FALLING

When I visited Oakland again, Terrence and I drank and laughed at how Trump was thrashing in controversy. I glanced at the large stack of empty beer bottles in his kitchen. Later, he told me he was behind on his rent and fighting depression.

“Sorry for unloading all this on you,” he said.

“No, no,” I said. “It’s all good.”

It was like the bottom fell out of his life and he was falling, falling, falling. I wanted to help but didn’t know how. Life was rushing by, too fast to catch. His former partner had given birth to a baby. His work projects

piled up, unfinished. Everything was rushing by.

We kept talking about politics, how Trump was causing a feminist reaction, how it would clean America of some of its sexism. After he crashed, I stayed up thinking of what I needed to be cleansed of and thought of Mark the waiter and another white man I met who slept in a tent in Central Park. Or the white woman who I talked with on a bus who was sexually harassed at work and quit. Or the white cab driver I met in upstate New York who juggled four jobs and never saw his family. On and on.

What if I didn’t think — white? What if I just thought human? We’re all human and we’re trapped in a history we can’t see and trapped in a system we can’t stop? After growing up around whites who didn’t see their privilege, I was grateful that whiteness was becoming easier to call out. But I didn’t like how it was now so bright for me that I was objectifying it, unable to feel the human being locked inside its burning visibility.

And I wasn’t alone. Poor whites were an intellectual fad. Books about the white working class line the shelves, like *Strangers in Their Own Land*, *White Trash*, *Hillbilly’s Eulogy*, and *Evicted*. Now that a large slice of poor and working-class white America nearly made Trump president, the elites were scrambling to understand them.

Poor and working-class whites are scared and wanted a strongman to rescue them. But Trump has already lost. The election will be a wave, immense and fast. When it hits, liberals will yell and do mock touchdown dances. And the next day, capitalism will keep grinding along and more people will slip, slip some more and then fall into the streets.

I was safer than most. Safer than my friend. A month ago, he was evicted. He was allowed time to get everything cleaned out. This morning, I got a text from him saying that he had left his home. He sent me photos of the open road. I didn’t know where my brother was going but he was on his way.

Nicholas Powers is a professor of African American literature at SUNY-Old Westbury.



CHARLYNE ALEXIS

IMMIGRANT VOTING

Continued from page 8

cess to registration forms in their native language, according to the Mayor's office. City polling places will also be required to have ballots translated into these 16 languages.

While this is a step towards greater enfranchisement — and legally mandated under the Voting Rights Act — many advocates say it is not enough to get immigrant citizens actively engaged in the political process.

"We need to ensure that the voter materials that are mailed to people, the voter guides, are in those languages," Murad Awawdeh, NYC's director of political engagement, said. "We need to ensure that when people get to the polls, they can speak to someone who speaks their language."

But Awawdeh thinks the most significant barrier to political engagement in immigrant communities is a lack of civic education. "This is all about education, if you can't educate people about why this is super important for them to do, then you're failing," he said.

Mun doubts the expansion of language access will make a substantial difference in voter engagement this fall.

"I wouldn't imagine voting would necessarily change

just because the number of languages that are available has increased," Mun said. "To me, the question is: is there active outreach on the ground that goes out to community members, day to day, informing them? It takes way more steps than just registering somebody to vote."

Kawas says that many individuals in the communities she works with have never participated in the political process before, either in the U.S. or their home countries.

"A lot of times, immigrants who are coming in are coming in as refugees," Kawas said. "They might not believe in the political system [or] they may have lived under a political system that didn't work for them. I think that population of people are people we need to have conversations with."

GETTING OUT THE VOTE

Immigration advocacy and organizing groups have worked hard throughout the fall to register and educate as many new voters as possible and are planning aggressive get-out-the-vote efforts leading up to Election Day.

Mohammad Razvi, executive director the Council of Peoples Organization, told The Independent that his team has registered more voters, most of whom are

South Asian immigrants, than ever before in the organization's 14-year history.

James Hong, who directs the MinKwon Center for Community Action, said that his coalition is knocking on thousands of doors and calling tens of thousands of people. The 19 organizations that the MinKwon Center works with expect to collectively contact over 100,000 Asian-American voters by November 8.

"We've been training other organizations, refining a message that will speak to our communities," Hong said.

COMMUNAL SELF-DEFENSE:

Mayra Aldás-Deckert, a community engagement coordinator at the New York Immigration Coalition, says fear of a Trump presidency has motivated many of New York's Latinx residents to become citizens and voters.

ELIZA REIMAN

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SUPPORT CLINTON

Continued from page 10

media in ways that go beyond this election, just as its use in this one surpassed that of past years. That made all the difference in mobilizing the Sanders campaign, record numbers in record time.

- *We will also have to use all these means to protect our sisters and brothers from backlash by the dregs of the Trump campaign. This is already happening: physical violence and an atmosphere of xenophobic terror. It involves armed fascists. They have allies in police departments and the armed forces. We would be mistaken to assume that the authorities will protect us. Self-defense is only effective if it is collective and wins broad mass support.*

- *The most daunting task will be rebuilding the peace movement. The question of war was the weakest point in Sanders' politics and the most ominous one in Clinton's. Tensions with Russia are already rising. We've seen the like before — with Vietnam, Central America, Iran, Iraq, and so on. The rhetoric and rationales change, but the toboggan ride to hell is always the same. Clinton is already moving policy to the right in this area. It will be harder to get broad unity for peace, but we have to figure it out and do it.*

Ethan Young is a Brooklyn writer/editor. He works with Left Labor Project, People for Bernie, and Portside.org.

VOTE JILL STEIN

Continued from Page 11

lieves in the gospel of Ayn Rand and that fire departments should be privatized? Election Day will be a test of how much progressive voters are willing to break with the two-corporate-party system. Supporting Jill Stein and Ajamu Baraka could be the next step in building a mass-membership party of the left, and the next step for Sanders supporters who want the “political revolution” to continue.

The Green Party has weathered 30 years and elected hundreds of progressive candidates at the local level. In Richmond, California, Gayle McLaughlin served two terms as a Green mayor, where she held the local Chevron oil refinery accountable for environmental violations and enraged big banks by saving residents facing foreclosure from evic-

tion. The Green door is open to disciplined leftists and organizers who want to grow an independent grass-roots party that can compete and win while developing a clear vision of the world we want to live in.

A vote for Jill Stein is a vote to assert our political power and our political aspirations. It's a vote to end extractivism and militarism, and in favor of a political platform that prioritizes health and human rights, and puts people, the planet, and peace before corporate profits.

Ursula Rozum is the Secretary of the Green Party of New York. She is also on the Steering Committee of the Syracuse Peace Council.

CAT'S OUT OF THE BAG

Continued from Page 11

Deal,” a massive public-works project that would convert the U.S. to solar and wind energy, creating thousands of jobs in the process. The problem I have is that her running mate, Ajamu Baraka, called the “Je suis Charlie” march in Paris after the Charlie Hebdo massacre of 2015 a “White Power rally,” arguing that it was a self-centered, arrogant defense of a racist magazine. That attitude was far too common on the U.S. left. It represents a Twitter-post-level understanding of both the nature of satire and French politics, and came a half-step away from condoning the cartoonists' murder.

Third parties can be a valid electoral strategy, but they have had much more success in local elections, where they actually have a reasonable chance of winning. In a national vote, it would take a phenomenal organizing effort and rare political circumstances for one to be more than a fringe or a spoiler. In the last 100 years, only one left-of-center third party has garnered more than 10% of the vote in a presidential election: Robert

LaFollette's Progressives in 1924. The last third party to win one was the Republicans in 1860, when the Democrats split into factions over slavery and Abraham Lincoln won a four-way race.

Therefore, I am going to cast my ballot for Nebulon Wishnia-Peña, a black female about 5 years old (that's arguably 35 in cat years, OK?) from the great state of Rhode Island. I will do this even though her aversion to almost all humans, not to mention her inability to speak English, Spanish, or any human language, would make her a terrible campaigner.

I know this is an absurdist and utterly impotent protest, an act of invisible symbolism fueled by despair. But given the alternatives available in the current system, it's the most I can do.

On the other hand, if I lived in Pennsylvania, I'd vote for Clinton.

Steven Wishnia is a longtime writer and editor for The Independent and has covered campaigning, conventions, and protests in five presidential elections.

WHAT'S A WOMAN TO DO?

TRUMP IS TERRIBLE BUT CLINTON LEAVES ME COLD

By MARIA MUENTES

During the second presidential debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, the Republican nominee lurked menacingly behind Clinton, his orange face scrunching up in hatred as she calmly answered questions from audience members.

I cringed. As women, we've all been there — forced to deal with terrifying jerks who feel entitled to inflict themselves on you just because they can. This was happening on national television in front of 67 million people. For the first time in this seemingly endless campaign, I felt a sense of commonality with Clinton.

Trump has run a campaign of racial and gender-based hatred, making turning on the television or going online a mental-health hazard for people of color and women. I fear what he inspires in his supporters. I fear that my two school-aged children will be the targets of actual violence. I fear that they will internalize the message of Trump's hate-propaganda campaign.

This is a man who has publicly lusted after his own daughter and a 10-year-old girl he met in an elevator. In 1989 he called for the death penalty for the five black teenagers ac-

cused in the Central Park Jogger rape case—and continues to insist that they were guilty, even though their convictions were overturned after another man's confession to the crime was confirmed by DNA evidence, and they received a \$41 million legal settlement from the city.

It's very painful to see poor whites embrace Trump for one simple reason: He makes it acceptable for them to express white nationalism openly. He will not help the white working class. He is anti-union. He has made it very clear that he is only interested in his own personal profit. Believing that he will help the white working class is as ludicrous as believing in the Easter Bunny, yet his base has not abandoned him, because he has made it okay to be racist again.

Nonetheless, Hillary Clinton's claim to be a scrappy champion of progressive ideals still rings false to me. She was an active partner in her husband's presidency. In that role, she helped pave the way for mass incarceration, more detention and deportation of immigrants, trade deals that disempowered workers, and a sacking of the safety net that turned poverty into destitution for millions of women and children. More recently, she has made millions of dollars speaking to Wall Street firms for six-figure fees. And who are the people most likely to suffer from the regime-change wars and coups she has helped to fan across the Middle East, North Africa, and Latin America? Women and children, of course.

These facts are painful to admit. I had recently graduated high school when I voted for Bill Clinton, the first time I cast a ballot in a presidential election. I actually believed the Democrats to be the party of the people. What I know now is that Republicans and Democrats are both just the enforcement arm of corporations and banks. Both parties protect the interests of the very wealthy. These are the tragic circumstances we find ourselves in.

New York is a safe state for Hillary Clinton, so I'm voting for the Green Party. If I lived in one of the handful of hotly contested swing states that will determine which candidate wins 270 electoral votes, I would certainly vote for Clinton, out of a very credible fear.

I have never had to make such a dismal choice in any election before. We as a country should be deeply ashamed. When this is all over, we need to ask ourselves how we came to such a sorry place.

Maria Muentes is a native New Yorker of Dominican and Ecuadorian descent. She has been involved in the immigrant rights, educational equality, and housing justice movements.



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52 AVENUE A
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172 ALLEN ST.
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52 PRINCE ST.
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THE INDYPENDENT

ECHOES OF TRUMP

Donald Trump's rise to political prominence has surprised and unsettled many Americans. But the United States is not alone in seeing an upsurge in far right political figures who espouse a toxic mix of bigotry and authoritarianism.

WE HAVE BECOME A MEANER, POORER PLACE

BY HAZEL HEALY

It was the stuff of nightmares (mine, anyway). The sight last August of Donald Trump and Nigel Farage together on a platform, pleased as punch. “What the Brexit campaign did,” said Farage, whose nationalist UKIP party campaigned hard for Britain to exit the European Union last June, “is we reached the people who’d been let down by modern corporatism.” Trump looked on, smiling and nodding approvingly. The crowd whooped.

There are clear parallels between Trump and Farage. Both men hail from the elites but have cast themselves in a populist mold, claiming to speak for the working classes who have lost out to globalization. The craven, spotlight-hungry Farage has even stooped to defending Trump’s gloating about sexually assaulting women as “alpha male boasting.” That drew criticism from his own party, which is not known for its defense of women’s rights.

The “Brexit” referendum freaked out Wall Street commentators who thought it indicated that Trump might ride a similar wave of populism to victory. While I honestly doubt that little Britain’s decision to leave the European Union has much impact on how Americans will vote, there are some similarities in the reckless “fuck you all” attitudes of those who would vote for these men or support their causes.

The motivations of the Brexiteers were widely varied. Hyped-up fears of immigration, a harking back to a sense of England-lost (the elderly were much more likely to vote to leave), and people who had nothing to lose. What was the EU to them? They didn’t speak foreign languages and were strangers to an elite world of university exchanges, research, cultural exchange, and exploratory travel. There were also those in the “Lexit” camp, who voted Leave in protest against a neoliberal Europe—a tragic miscalculation.

So as America teeters on the edge of a possible Trump election, what can progressives share from across the Atlantic?

Post-Brexit Britain was recently characterized by The Economist as a meaner, poorer place. Whether those that voted Leave were racist or not (I tend to think yes), the result emboldened racists who felt legitimized by a campaign that scapegoated immigrants. Flyers reading “No more Polish vermin” were stuffed into immigrant families’ mailboxes, and in late August, a Polish man, Arek Jozwik, was beaten to death by a mob of teenagers in a London suburb, apparently after they heard him speaking Polish. Reported homophobic attacks more than doubled in the three months after the vote. A group of men marched in London with the slogan “First we’ll get the Poles out, then the gays.

But the far right has not benefited from the result. Support for Farage’s UKIP party has dropped slightly, according to an ICM poll released Oct. 10. Rather than ram home the horror of the Conservatives’ disastrous decision to hold the Brexit referendum, the left has been busy ripping itself apart with internecine struggles over Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership of the Labour party. It has been the Conservatives who have somehow risen like a phoenix, victorious, from the Brexit mess that they created.

New Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May is now deftly easing her party into the populist space crystallized by Brexit. She is attempting to draw a line between herself and the elitist Eton-educated cabal that proceeded her, recasting the Tories as a party for the common people. Party leaders have floated such pleasant ideas such as Home Secretary Amber Rudd advocating that companies should be forced to declare how many foreign workers they have. (Rudd backtracked after her idea was compared to Adolf Hitler’s.)

How has all this gone down with the people? The ICM poll put the Conservatives 17 points ahead of Labour. But at the same time, Jeremy Corbyn, re-elected as leader at his party’s conference in September, now finds himself at the head of the largest political party in Western Europe, with a membership of over 500,000.

Corbyn contends that he will bring out new voters, inspired by his honest, pro-worker approach to politics. Is he right? We’ll see if the Labour party can stay in one piece. But it may be that the Brexit buzz will wear off quickly when people discover that leaving the EU or limiting immigration will not improve their lot.

Corbyn’s anti-austerity message may be getting through. Meanwhile, “movement people,” those who might have described themselves as anarchists just a few years back, are joining Labour.

These are people as tired of out-of-touch elites as Bernie Sanders supporters in the U.S. Maybe a new generation will be invigorated to take their country back, not from Europe, but from a xenophobic tide that sits ill in a nation whose capital is more diverse than New York.

What have we learned from this – apart from not giving up our seats for old people on public transport, as one young person wrote on Twitter? It’s time to re-engage with politics. We need to come back stronger with the anti-austerity message to focus discontent on the true drivers of inequality and find better, stronger ways to challenge the scapegoating of immigrants.

Hazel Healy is a co-editor of the U.K.-based New Internationalist.

THE LESSER-EVIL SMOKESCREEN

BY FARAH BELAGGOUNE

In the spring of 2002, progressive French voters like myself were confronted with an awful choice in the final round of that year's presidential election.

The incumbent, Jacques Chirac, was a slippery career politician who had been a prominent figure in France for 30 years. He supported conservative economic policies and would play on voter hostility toward immigrants when it suited his purpose. His opponent was Jean-Marie Le Pen, founder and leader of the far-right Front National (National Front) and a notorious racist and Holocaust minimizer.

The candidate of the Parti Socialiste (Socialist Party) had unexpectedly come in third in the first round, leaving those of us on the left with nowhere to go. Since having a far rightist come to power would be unacceptable, leftists were urged to cast a vote utile, a "useful vote," despite our misgivings. So we rallied in support of Chirac. One popular slogan was "vote for the crook, not the fascist," and another was "vote with a clothespin on your nose."

Does this sound familiar?

When Election Day came, the French people voted overwhelmingly against Le Pen, re-electing Chirac with 82% of the vote. The National Front had been overwhelmingly repudiated and once again relegated to the fringes of public life. Or so we thought.

Fourteen years later, the National Front is in a stronger position than ever. It won regional elections across the country last December. According to recent polls, the party's immigrant-bashing leader, Marine Le Pen (Jean-Marie's daughter), would win by a landslide if next year's presidential election were held today.

The roots of how this came about go back to the 1980s, when the Socialists saw the birth of the National Front as an opportunity to drain the votes of the traditional right and keep it out of power. This worked for a while, but then the worm got into the fruit.

Over the past 30 years, the extreme right has managed to hijack the French political discourse on issues like immigration, government spending, social issues, high taxes, national security, and the decline of France's sovereignty in a globalized world. Instead of building a proper response to the National Front or just ignoring it, the Socialists and the traditional conservatives decided to follow the its sheet music and allow the LePenization of minds to deepen. Former President Nicolas Sarkozy, before he was defeated for re-election by Socialist François Hollande in 2012, offered a somewhat milder version of the extreme right's anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric. He is now running again, with the same strategy. His idea is now that to be considered French, one's ancestors must be Gauls. On the contrary, Marine Le Pen's new slogan is "a pacified France," putting a veil on FN's racist origins. France's political system is upside down.

Both sides failed to comprehend that in a context of brutal economic insecurity, people were desperate for a shelter. Many found it in the National Front's moral universe, with its simplistic appeal to old and idealized values wrapped in "law and order" populist rhetoric.

To many French, far-right activists were the only ones who even pretended to be concerned about improving peoples' lives before going on to secure a comfortable seat in office. They knew the population and its fears. They gave people a sense of belonging and didn't deny their difficulties. Many of the discontented are seeking something new, observing that their living conditions keep getting worse while the two major parties—the Socialists and Sarkozy's *Républicains* (Republicans, changed in 2015 from the Union for a Movement of the People)—alternate in power without changing anything.

Both major parties have been blinkered by their never-ending race to the next local or national election. All that has mattered to them was the short-term strategy for garnering more votes. They were unwilling to take the time to analyze the deeper reasons for the National Front's growing success.

The more politicians and journalists comment on and take on the Front's issues and grievances, the more legitimized those ideas become. Voting for "lesser evils" that are always ready to abandon their principles and move further to the right only makes the situation worse.

On November 8, don't waste your energy on the lesser-evil smokescreen. Step back and see the whole picture. It is not too late to stop the Trumpization of American minds and media. Your salvation might come from your left, which appears to be on the upsurge, unlike ours in France. Continue organizing and mobilizing for the kind of world you want, and you just may get it.

Farah Belaggoune is a Paris-based educator and Fulbright Scholar who is studying the U.S. Left and independent media.



JÉRÔME VABRE



DAWN LLANERA

SEEKING SHELTER IN A TERRIFYING FATHER FIGURE

By Tracy Llanera

Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte makes Donald Trump look like a spineless brat. On Sept. 30, Duterte said he would be "happy to slaughter" the nation's estimated 3 million drug users, much like Adolf Hitler exterminated Jews. Since he took office in June, more than 3,500 alleged addicts (and a few innocent bystanders) have been killed by police, vigilante groups, or unknown assailants. That number doesn't include the more than 1,400 people slain by the Davao Death Squad, a vigilante group linked to Duterte during the 22 years he was mayor of Davao City, the nation's largest city outside the Manila metropolitan area.

Like Trump, Duterte has a reputation for being crude with women, bragging about his two wives and two girlfriends. After Australian missionary Jacqueline Hamill was raped and murdered during a 1989 prison riot, he joked that he "was mad she was raped," but that he, the mayor, "should have been first." He got away with it.

Despite this, recent polls show Duterte enjoying an unprecedented 91% "trust" rating and a "very good" net satisfaction rating in this nation of 102 million people. His militant machismo is what makes people either worship or despise him. But unlike Trump, Duterte has a long record in local politics. In 1988, when he became mayor of Davao, a city of 1.6 million on the southern island of Mindanao, it was one of the nation's most violent places. He transformed the city into a peaceful, prosperous commercial and tourist hub by becoming as ruthless and as frightening as the criminal forces that plagued it, with hundreds of petty criminals liquidated. He has denied ties to the Davao Death Squad, but said in 2005 that the best way to deal with criminals was "summary execution."

As president, Duterte promises the Philippines the same discipline and security. These are clear and simple successes that Filipinos, their lives long beset by injustice, poverty, and crime, are happy to welcome. He has also said the United States is hypocritical to complain about human rights violations when its army massacred more than 250,000 Filipinos in Mindanao during the 1899-1902 war that made the nation a U.S. colony.

Duterte and Trump are the politicians you get when governments are run by an oligarchic elite and the dissatisfied public seeks a messiah. Prior to Duterte, Philippine national elections were marred by vote-buying and distrust of the traditional political families. Duterte ran as an outsider, a figure unblemished by the "cacique democracy" of Manila and its debilitating corruption. For many, this makes him the best candidate for ushering in real change, even if it means swallowing his death squads and his exaggerating the nation's drug crisis to justify them. (Filipinos use "shabu," methamphetamine, at rates similar to Americans, and cocaine and heroin use are negligible.)

While their messianic roles indicate why they enjoy strong and often uncritical support, remaining generally immune from the consequences of their words and actions, Trump and Duterte play different versions of strongman politics. Trump

Continued on page 23

BIRTH PANGS OF A NATION

Birth of a Nation
DIRECTED BY NATE PARKER
120 MINUTES, RATED R
THEATERS CITYWIDE

By Mark Read

“Is there anything redeemable about the movie?” I was asked about Nate Parker’s new film, *Birth of a Nation*. The question struck me as ironic: The film’s central themes revolve around the question of redemption. Add to this Parker’s real-life efforts to redeem himself in the public eye after recent revelations of his 1999 arrest for sexual assault and rape (he was acquitted, while his codefendant and co-writer, Jean Celestin, was found guilty but later had the conviction overturned), and the theme of redemption begins to feel omnipresent within and around the world of this film.

Redemption is defined in the dictionary as “the action of saving or being saved from sin, error, or evil.” The sin here is chattel slavery in the United States. Salvation from this evil is the central struggle for all the characters in *Birth of a Nation*, as told through the eyes of its protagonist, Nat Turner, the famed leader of the 1831 slave revolt that was the bloodiest in U.S. history. But the film “explains” Turner’s decision to lead the revolt as a direct response to the rape of his wife. This unmoors the rebellion from its historical reality as an uprising based on moral opposition against the institution of slavery itself. Somehow, that motivation wasn’t deemed sufficiently dramatic, so the rebellion is transformed into a revenge narrative, a vehicle to redeem black masculinity from the humiliations of slavery.

In telling this story, rather than the actually true and more politically powerful story of slaves rising up against slavery as a path towards redeeming black humanity, Parker has diminished the power of this important history. Furthermore, by characterizing the women primarily as victims whose violations serve solely to motivate male action, he has effectively sidelined Black women, silencing the historical echoes of women like Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth. It is for those reasons that black historian Leslie Alexander dismissed the film as an “epic fail” in her review for the *Nation* magazine.

REDEEMING QUALITIES

The film is not entirely without redeeming qualities, however. The depiction of the relationship between Nat Turner and his owners, the Turner family, particularly the relationship between Nat and their son Samuel, functions as a powerful metaphor through which Parker addresses a modern audience about the conditions that allow white supremacy to continue.

The Turners are shown to be “good masters” throughout most of the film. They are kinder and more generous to their slaves than most, allowing a degree of dignity and autonomy that appears to make life as a slave bearable, at least for Nat. Nat and Samuel are shown playing together as small children. Mrs. Turner is the classic compassionate slave-owning missus, teaching Nat to read, protecting him from the hard labor of the fields, and even allowing him to read the Bible before her all-white congregation. Later, when they’ve grown up, we witness Samuel Turner risk his social position to defend Nat from attack by a white man. These two men are depicted as close companions capable of mutual respect, connected through old bonds of friendship. Parker is setting the audience up to feel some affection for Samuel: He isn’t such a bad guy after all. He didn’t create slavery, and he’s doing his best to be decent within an indecent system upon which his entire way of life relies.

Nat’s evolution from contented slave to revolutionary prophet parallels Samuel’s descent from apparent decency into alcoholism and cruelty. These evolutions transpire during a tour of slave plantations, after Samuel agrees to rent out Nat’s gifts as an itinerant preacher. They travel from one horror show to another, witnessing increasingly brutal and terrifying conditions. This tour feels reminiscent of Quentin Tarantino’s film *Django Unchained*, but instead of the gleeful satisfaction of seeing a former slave punish evil slave owners with the aid of his white ally, we witness a slave forced to mollify and pacify other slaves through sermons that encourage loyalty and deference to authority.

As the fundamental and irredeemable brutality of slavery is laid bare, these two men inexorably grow estranged. We see slavery driving one towards madness and the other towards destruction. Samuel is constantly drunk, growing ever more callous and cruel, enabling rape and demanding torture. Nat grows more fierce and prophetic, enlisting followers and demanding bloodshed in return. Their fates are inseparable.

UNTIL WE ARE ALL FREE

Watching this drove home for me the centrality of the concept of interdependence, as articulated within moral philosophy, particularly by Christian moral philosophers from Reinhold Niebuhr to James Cohn to Cornel West. Parker has animated the fundamental truth that oppression degrades both the oppressed and the oppressor. This is never to say that these degradations

are in any way equal. It is to say, however, that one’s personal freedom is bound up with the freedom of others. Despite his power and position, Samuel cannot be truly free, because Nat is not free.

Neither, it seems, can Samuel Turner or his family be redeemed, so long as the institution of slavery persists. The kindness and good intentions of the Turners cannot save them from the violent consequences of a violent system from which they benefit. The Turners and the people that they represent — decent and well-meaning whites — cannot or will not imagine a life for themselves without slavery. For this reason, they cannot be redeemed, and that is a tragedy.

This is a powerful lesson for white people today. We are not free until everyone is free. Looking away from the fundamental and institutional ways that black people are kept down and simply trying to demonstrate good intentions will not redeem us. If we are not fighting for universal emancipation, we are ensuring the continued bondage and oppression

NAT TURNER’S EVOLUTION FROM CONTENTED SLAVE TO REVOLUTIONARY PROPHET PARALLELS HIS ENSLAVEMENT’S DESCENT FROM APPARENT DECENCY INTO ALCOHOLISM AND CRUELTY.

of our brothers and sisters.

Despite *Birth of a Nation*’s significant flaws and problems, the film powerfully communicates these messages. While I can’t strongly recommend it, neither can I dismiss it so easily.



FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES/20TH CENTURY FOX

BOOKS

SCRUTINIZING WHITENESS

White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America
NANCY ISENBERG
VIKING, 2016

White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide
CAROL ANDERSON
BLOOMSBURY, 2016

By Matt Wasserman

It is hard to explain Donald Trump's rise to Republican presidential nominee without making reference to white trash. We use euphemisms, of course, because we're aware that the term is impolite. Hillary Clinton refers to Trump supporters as a racist "basket of deplorables." Journalists from the coasts profile formerly Democratic-voting, downwardly mobile whites in the Trump Country of Appalachia and the Rust Belt without ever using that term. But we all know who they're talking about, even if the words "redneck," "hillbilly" or "cracker" never cross their lips. And we agree that they're one of the few groups that are an appropriate target of derision, whether in the form of the Beverly Hillbillys or Honey Boo Boo.

In *White Trash*, Nancy Isenberg paints a picture of poor whites that I found surprisingly sympathetic, ranging from the Jamestown colony to TV depictions of poor whites. In her telling, a strata of despised poor whites has existed in this country from the very earliest European settlements. In fact, that was one of the function of the colonies: to absorb the so-called scum of England. Isenberg compellingly argues that this permanent underclass of poor whites shows the hollowness of the American mantra of meritocracy and the lie of the American claim to being a classless society.

However, I couldn't help feeling that there is a hole in the center of this book: Isenberg is immensely attuned to how class works, but devotes scant discussion to how it interacts with race. She shows only in passing how poor whites have interacted with non-whites. But while other white people may mock them or repress them, the identity of poor whites is built around being white, not black.

Nonetheless, *White Trash* is an important contribution to understanding how class works in the United States—and the rot at the heart of our polity. And it is also a good read. Despite displaying the chops of an academic historian, Isenberg is an engaging writer.

Hand-in-hand with society's trashing of poor whites is the demonization of blacks — a topic heavily discussed

in Carol Anderson's *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*. Black men, in the American collective unconscious, are deeply intertwined with violence and criminality. We saw this when Dylann Roof told the parishioners at Emanuel AME church in Charleston, South Carolina, before opening fire: "you rape our women and are killing our country." When Jesse Jackson expressed his fear of black men walking behind him late at night. And every time Donald Trump lays out a vision of black communities as battlefields that seems drawn from repeat viewings of New Jack City rather than trips uptown.

This racialized presumption of violence and inherent danger is so strong, it is difficult for many to see the countless black men killed by police officers as victims. Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Alton Sterling and so on: With each death, there was a rush to paint the fallen as thugs, or to suggest the deceased had just committed a crime or to claim he was resisting. For one reason or another, they always had it coming.

When people react to these tragedies with indignation or protest, others take it as a symptom of irrational black rage. But, as Anderson, a professor at Emory University, argued in a *Washington Post* op-ed that was the precursor to this current book, media coverage focused of black rage in the wake of Ferguson ignored the far more potent white rage that shapes where we live, where we go to school, and where we work.

It was white rage that ended Reconstruction and enforced racial domination under Jim Crow. It was white rage that kept African-Americans from reaping the full benefits of the New Deal and limited them to a few red-lined neighborhoods. And it was white backlash against the civil rights movement that led to the on-the-ground nullification of court-ordered school desegregation — in the South and the North — as well as the rise of mass incarceration.

White rage — or opposition to black advancement — is not limited to spectacular acts like lynchings, of course. In Anderson's words, "White rage is not about visible violence, but rather it works its way through the courts, the legislatures, and a range of government bureaucracies." This enforcement of racial hierar-

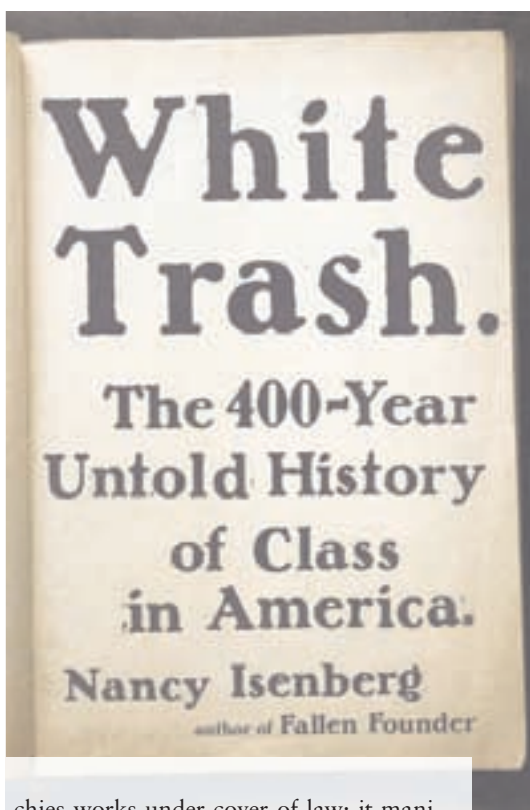
chies works under cover of law: it manifests itself in underfunded urban schools, criminal courtrooms full of black men in shackles, and citizens not allowed to vote.

Much of Anderson's survey of how white rage has shaped the United States since the Civil War will likely be already familiar to readers of *The Independent*. If you know of Ta-Nehisi Coates' work on racist housing policy, Bryan Stevenson and the Equal Justice Initiative's efforts to commemorate the victims of lynchings or Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*, you'll recognize many of the signposts on the road Anderson travels. What is most novel here is her claim that white rage is not just a leitmotif of American history since the Civil War, but a central explanatory variable. She links disparate moments and issues to demonstrate how white rage has shaped — and continues to shape — every facet of our lives.

If we believe that black lives should matter, understanding the ways they cur-

rently do not seems like an essential first step. Anderson's compact book serves this purpose well. But her target audience is unclear to me. Those who agree with her central thesis may find that she offers little new; those who do not know this history may be put off her polemic tone.

What I most missed in Anderson's account was some explanation for the force and tenacity of white rage. Is it simply a matter of racial animus and prejudice? Of trying to hold on to the unearned privileges and perquisites of white skin? Something else entirely? If we are to dismantle racial hierarchy, we need a theory of the material and psychic benefits it provides to the white masses, including those poor whites chronicled by Isenberg — and, thus, how they can be won to true racial equality.



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FRI. AUG 12 • 7-9:30PM
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THE INDEPENDENT

ASK REVEREND BILLY



JOHN GUILTY

I feel anxiety from the election. I'm having trouble sleeping. I find my focus is shot. I hate to admit that the election matters this much, but it's getting under my skin.

— Daryl, Ditmas Park

Dear Presidentially Anxious in Brooklyn,
Anxiety is the landscape of the Land of the Free. Our society is based on hand-wringing, gnashing of teeth. Multinational corporations, the military, sports, porn, Hollywood — all the big institutions of American life have discovered fear makes money. They've known that since the invention of advertising. Trump is showing the big boys they can be much more brazen about it.

Let's arrange the candidates in order of ascending murderousness. The 3rd party candidates taunt us. They are the human candidates we could have had. Clinton smiles in our face like the Wal-Mart logo, where she was on the board destroying communities and hiding an empire of sweatshops. Trump is a blithering psychopath who would shoot refugees on the beach. (Testify, Miss Universe!)

There is a reason the Saturday Night Live caricatures of the candidates are so lame. They will never catch up the weirdness of the actual candidates. But if we think that the $E=MC^2$ of everything is these would-be presidents, then we're sucked farther into their bizarre fear-generates-profits world.

Clinton and Trump are essentially New Yorkers. So, let's change this town.

Go Local. There is nothing as radical as a healthy neighborhood.

If a landlord slaps an eviction notice on your neighbor's door, treat that as more important than a Putin flyby in the Crimea. That landlord is your Putin. Better yet, break into buildings that are empty for investment purposes — break in and give New Yorkers homes.

If they are spraying herbicides in your neighborhood park, go warn your neighbors.

A Local Power Movement starts from your insides out, the opposite of the outside-in hypnosis of iPhones, televisions and this election. It calls for embarrassment, long hours, chutzpah, and sometimes jail.

Anxiety is cured by activism.

Dear Pastor Bill,
I was an activist like you for many years but I've gotten very involved in supporting my family and building a home for us since I reached my 30's. I spend time on pipes and roof leaks, I have a long-term mortgage, etc. Recently, a homeless shelter moved onto my quiet street. I hear a lot of shouting and music from them. There are cigarette butts everywhere now. My old days of activism seem a long way away. I don't seem to have patience with these people. I feel invaded. I can't move. I'm stuck here.

— Frank in the Bronx

Dear Frank,
You can use the activism of your youth to good effect. Activism is going out into public space, into the public mind, and introducing new ideas there.

See if you can muster that old moxie from your activist days. Go have a smoke the shelter folks. Go into this surprise subculture that showed up on your street and get to know some of the people by their first name. Think of it as fixing the pipes beyond the property line.

I'm not a Christian, but I like the golden rule, "Do unto your neighbors as you would have them do unto you."

Imagine you are a homeless person, have been for years, and you finally find a shelter on a safe street. It isn't a warehouse or an armory. It's human-size, family-size. You move in there and you feel happy and secure. You can just be yourself, have a smoke outside and laugh, because some of your housemates are good people. And you remember, there's this other guy who joins you sometimes. He lives a couple doors down, a working stiff with kids. He hangs out, too. Nice guy. Name is Frank. You say to your buddies, "We gotta be careful not to be too loud, cause it keeps Frank's fam awake and his kids gotta go to school in the morning."

See what I'm sayin'?

— REVEREND BILLY TALEN

Reverend Billy is an activist and political shouter, a post-religious preacher of the streets and bank lobbies. He's been in New York forever with the activist performance group the Church of Stop Shopping. Got a question for Reverend Billy? Just email RevBilly@Independent.org and unburden your soul.

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HALLOWEEN TALES YOUR MAMA NEVER TOLD YOU



GARY MARTIN

BY INDYPENDENT STAFF

Mythic Origins

Like the night itself, the origins of Halloween are shrouded in mystery. Many folklorists, however, trace its roots to the Celtic festival Samhain, which marked the end of the harvest season. Samhain was a time when the veil between this world and the otherworld was lifted. The souls of the dead could arise from beyond the grave. To ward off misfortune, the Gaels would set a place at their tables for spirits to come and have a bit to eat and drink. They lit bonfires and carved sinister faces into turnips — precursors to modern-day jack-o-lanterns — to ward off evil spirits.

Evil Manners

With the spread of Christianity, Samhain was folded into the Catholic tradition of Allhallowtide. Nov. 2 became All Souls Day; Nov. 1, All Hallows Day or All Saints Day; and Oct. 31, All Hallows Eve. The Celtic tribes of Ireland were some of the last pagan holdouts. In 1154, Pope Adrian IV ordered fellow Englishman King Henry II to “check the torrent of wickedness” and reform “evil manners” on the isle.

Cross-Dressing

On Samhain, the Celts wore white and shrouded their faces in an effort to blend in with the spirits roving the earth. Their descendants continued to play dress-up. “There is a long tradition of costuming of sorts that goes back to Hallow Mass when people prayed for the dead,” according to historian Nicholas Rogers of York University. “But they also prayed for fertile marriages, and the boy choristers in the churches dressed up as virgins. So there was a certain degree of cross dressing in the actual ceremony of All Hallow’s Eve.”

Down in the Cellar

The medieval practice of mumming or guising, when the poor, often children, dressed-up in straw-woven costumes and went door-to-door performing songs and skits in exchange for food, is also thought to be related to Samhain. During Allhallowtide the poor knocked on doors dressed as demons, saints and angels and offered prayers to the dead in exchange for soul cakes, sweet pastries topped with a cross. Beer and apples were also acceptable forms of alms, as one

old English folksong has it:

*Down into the cellar,
And see what you can find,
If the barrels are not empty,
We hope you will prove kind.
We hope you will prove kind,
With your apples and strong beer,
And we'll come no more a-souling
Till this time next year.*

Early Irish immigrants are thought to have brought guising to North America, customs that eventually morphed into trick-or-treating as we know it today.

Fork up the Candy, or Else. . .

Trick-or-treat was no empty threat in the early 20th Century. Many an outhouse was overturned, a cow tipped and a mansion egged.

Drawing on the work of British cultural anthropologist Victor Turner, the novelist and prankmaster Chuck Palahniuk has described Halloween as a “cultural inversion liminal event”:

[D]ispossessed people, people with no power — usually children, but not always — would go door-to-door and demand tribute. If you didn't pay them tribute, your property would be destroyed. . . There was a big movement in the 1920s. So much damage was being done at Halloween that candy manufacturers got together with newspapers and they started to promote the idea of candy as tribute. Trick-or-treat became what we know of it today, instead of a social power inversion ritual.

The earliest known reference to the phrase “trick or treat” comes from appears in the Nov. 4 1927 edition of a newspaper Alberta, Canada, where, apparently, masqueraders were still keeping things light:

Hallowe'en provided an opportunity for real strenuous fun. No real damage was done except to the temper of some who had to hunt for wagon wheels, gates, wagons, barrels, etc., much of which decorated the front street. The youthful tormentors were at back door and front

demanding edible plunder by the word “trick or treat” to which the inmates gladly responded and sent the robbers away rejoicing.

Monsters of the World Unite

Halloween today occupies a unique place in America’s never-ending culture wars. The holiday is demonized by Evangelical Christians for its satanic overtones and praised by libertarians as a rite of consumerism. Mounting a socialist defense of Halloween, English fantasy writer China Mieville has characterized dread is an innate component of human rationality, central to our ability to imagine, play with and prepare for alternative realities, such as a time when billionaires no longer walk the earth.

FATHER FIGURE

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projects the image of the brash, shining American capitalist, his supporters aspiring to be as rich and powerful as him.

It is more fitting to think of Duterte as the ominous father of the Filipino people, a savior born of an infantile necessity. Filipinos do not want to become Duterte. Instead, they want their Tatay Digong (Father Digong) to take

care of them and to make sure their house is safe. This explains why Duterte’s violence is being condoned, and why the collateral damage of his drug war — the killings of a five-year-old girl and the many cases of mistaken identity — has not been enough to generate deep public condemnation. The need for a strict but loving leader to fix the broken roof is more important than the lives of the errant and the petty others.

Referring to leaders as family is not new to Philippine politics. The late dictator Fer-

dinand Marcos, ousted in 1986, remains widely known as Apo Marcos in his home region of Northern Ilocos (Apo is a title of respect used to address a superior or an elder, or God). Ex-President Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III is often evaluated in terms of how much he stands up to the legacy of his father, Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino Jr., a national hero who was imprisoned and exiled by Marcos and assassinated upon his return in 1983.

It’s election time, and the American people still have the chance to “fire” Trump. If the

Filipinos want to get rid of Rodrigo Duterte, it won’t be easy to disown their imagined kin.

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